

2014

Identifying Identity: An Archaeological Investigation of the Intersection of Place and Identity at an African American Lowcountry Site

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IDENTIFYING IDENTITY: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE
INTERSECTION OF PLACE AND IDENTITY AT AN AFRICAN AMERICAN
LOWCOUNTRY SITE

by

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Bachelor of Arts
Hofstra University, 2009

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts in

Anthropology

College of Arts and Sciences

University of South Carolina

2014

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis was possible only with the help of a vast network of professors, colleagues, friends, and family. First and foremost I would like to thank the Brown Family of James Island for allowing me into their homes and providing great support and collaboration throughout my time working on this project. Millicent Brown and her passion for history have been a driving force for the initiation of this research; Minerva King and Arthur Brown provided invaluable insight, and generously shared their own personal experiences. I would like to especially thank all of the members of my thesis committee, who have provided incredible support and direction throughout the research and writing process. Thank you to Ken Kelly for keeping me on track and helping me to sort through so many iterations of thoughts. To Jodi Barnes, thank you for helping me to get involved in this project as well as for your assistance in considering the many possible interpretations of data, and thanks as well to you and Carl Steen for your work on Gullah Archaeology that has been inspirational throughout my research. To Erica Gibson, thank you for your thoughtful questions and attention to detail that helped me hone in on the focal points of this thesis. To Terry Weik, thank you for introducing me to many new and productive analytical methods. And to Carlina de la Cova, thank you for your unique perspectives, valuable input, and detailed editing. Thanks also to Leland Ferguson, Chris Judge, Jake Crockett, and Kevin Fogle for extremely helpful consultation in conducting artifact analysis. Research for this project would not have been possible without the generous financial support of the Archaeological Society of South Carolina,

the University of South Carolina Anthropology Department, and the University of South Carolina's Research Initiative Department. Finally, thank you to all the faculty and my colleagues of the Anthropology Department at the University of South Carolina, your constant encouragement was essential for all I have accomplished.

ABSTRACT

African and African American communities have faced pressures of marginalization and racism in the South Carolina Lowcountry since their arrival with Europeans in the seventeenth century. These pressures have been felt physically, socially, economically, politically, and even academically, through misrepresentations in historical portrayals. The field of historic archaeology is uniquely situated with access to informative sources from both the past and the present, and as such exhibits great potential in taking strides to replace the limiting presentation of a static and homogenous single African American culture with views that instead emphasize a focus on unique cultures and identities. This thesis attempts to contribute to conversations on the archaeology of identity by investigating the site of an African American family's occupation in coastal South Carolina. In looking to the material evidence of occupation at the Ferguson Road Tract uncovered through archaeological endeavors, historical documentary records spanning the time of local occupation, and oral accounts of descendants and current occupants of the property, this thesis will demonstrate the potential for interpreting the interactions of place and the identity of its occupants within the local social environment in the form of a multidisciplinary framework for researching African American archaeological sites in the South Carolina coastal region that may be used as a template for future African American Lowcountry sites.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The South Carolina Lowcountry and James Island have been host to a diverse history of interactions between Africans and African Americans with Native Americans, Europeans, and their descendants. This area represents a zone of intense cultural complexity, and provides a unique opportunity to engage research endeavors that attempt to shed light on archaeological representation of identities, in light of changes they may undergo over time. Identity is extremely complex, influenced by a myriad of political, social, and cultural factors, many of which are often unknown even to the individual who recognizes with a particular identity. Anthropologists and archaeologists are intrigued by identities, the processes by which they are formulated, and how they change over time. Indeed, the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century saw a surge of interest in accessing such attributes of identity through an interpretation of the archaeological record (for examples see Conlin and Fowler 2004; Insoll 2007; Jones 1997; Meskell 2002; Orser 2002; Voss 2005; Wilkie 2000). Even more obscured than the singular identity of an individual, perhaps, is how to investigate the composite of multiple identities of the many individuals who have occupied one place. Historical archaeology seeks to discern the sum of identities of the people who have inhabited a place by using an analysis of the collection of material cultural remains recovered through excavations, in conjunction with oral and documentary accounts, to tell the story of what has happened throughout its occupation, and how various factors influenced the

place as we see it today. This thesis attempts to contribute to conversations on the archaeology of identity by investigating the site of an African American family's occupation in coastal South Carolina; in looking to the material evidence of occupation uncovered through archaeological endeavors, historical documentary records spanning the time of local occupation, and oral accounts of descendants and current occupants of the property, I will demonstrate the potential for interpreting the role of place in shaping the identity of its occupants within the local social environment. Specifically, my main research questions include: Who lived on the Ferguson Road property, and how did they fit in and interact with their physical and social environment? How does place interact with identity at the Ferguson Road Tract? How did the occupants of the property interact with and adapt to an evolving Gullah cultural identity? And finally, how do modern occupants of the land, as stakeholders, interact with the story of the land? What role do, and should, these stakeholders play in an interpretation of the property's story?

In the fall of 2011 I was contacted by Dr. Jodi Barnes, who was at the time working as the Archaeologist and GIS Coordinator at the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office. Dr. Barnes had recently been in contact with Dr. Millicent Brown, Assistant Professor of History at Claflin University, who was a representative of members of a prominent African American family who had been residents of a James Island property since "forever" (Brown and Brown, personal communications 2012) and were interested in further research and exploration of their Lowcountry land. The property in question was investigated by the cultural resource management firm TRC in 2006 and 2007, preceding the planned construction of a housing complex commissioned

by the Brown Family¹. After Phase I and Phase II survey investigations yielded a number of positive test pits, archaeological sites 38CH2105 and 38CH2106 were established, hereafter referred to as the Ferguson Road Tract sites. At this time the sites were declared eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places as locations of historic and prehistoric occupation (Grunden 2011). As the development plans could not be reworked to avoid impacting the Ferguson Road Tract sites, in 2007 TRC conducted a full-scale excavation designed to mitigate these effects.

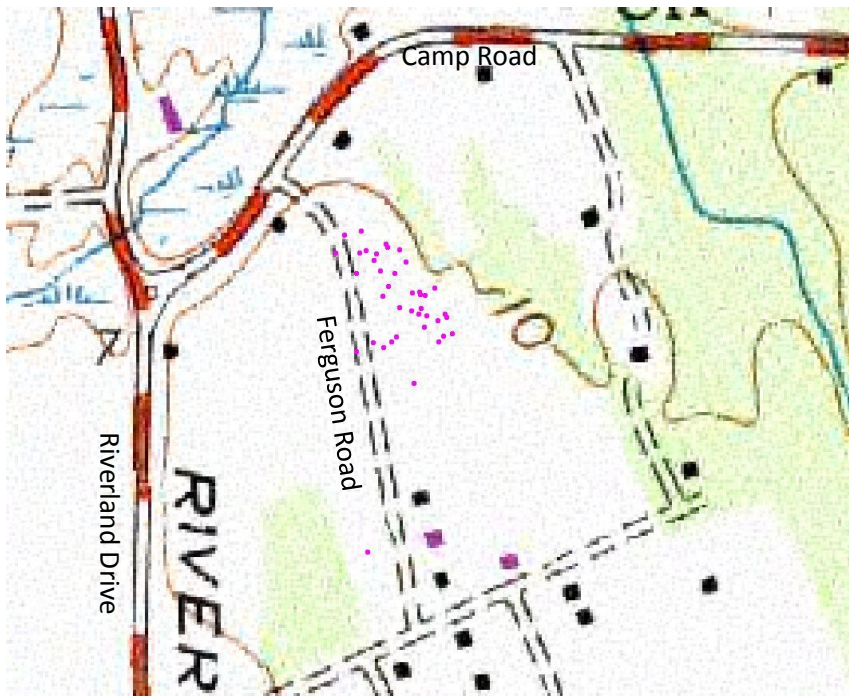


Figure 1.1: Map showing location and excavation area of Ferguson Road Tract (Grunden personal communication 2012)

Figure 1.1 above depicts the Ferguson Road Tract property, which is bounded by Camp Road to the north, and lies slightly to the east of the intersection of Camp Road

¹ Due to financial constraints, the housing development project was delayed shortly after excavation by TRC was completed. The project was restarted in 2013, and as of the publication date of this thesis negotiations are in progress.

and Riverland Drive. The small purple dots indicate features identified during TRC's excavation², located on both the east and west sides of Ferguson Road³. The black and purple boxes indicate currently existing structures.

As a person interested in African American archaeology, and as a stranger to the area and community, I was struck by the notable presence of Gullah culture on and around James Island. The Gullah/Geechee⁴ Cultural Heritage Corridor, an area of national heritage designated by the United States Congress, stretches along the eastern coasts from North Carolina to Florida, and is home to a cultural group that is believed to have derived from conditions associated with the Task System (the structure of which allowed for "free time" after the completion of the day's task, enabling individuals to engage in cultural activities) of coastal plantation slavery (Barnes and Steen 2012a, 2012b; Crook 2001; Goodwine 1998; Jarett and Lucas 2002). Acknowledging the significant lack of attention paid and consideration given to the potential existence of sites specifically Gullah in the South Carolina Lowcountry (Barnes and Steen 2012a; National Park Service 2005), I was hoping to work towards filling in some of the gaps in that literature. Focused on such research questions (outlined by Barnes and Steen 2012a, 2012b; Steen and Barnes 2010) as: With such a large percentage of the historic population of South Carolina comprised of Africans or African Americans (and their descendants), and the existence of Gullah culture documented among that population (see

² A list of all features identified by TRC is included in the appendix.

³ Ferguson Road separates the two sites that were investigated by TRC; 38CH2105 is located to the east of the road, 38CH2106 is located to the west of the road.

⁴ Most sources explain the difference between Gullah and Geechee as a geographical separation, with Gullah (term likely derived from Angola and/or Gola of the Windward coast) groups residing in the South Carolina Lowcountry, and Geechee (term likely derived from the Ogeechee River in Georgia) referring to those populations living south of the Savannah river (for example Morgan 2010).

for example Chandler 2008; Frazier 2006; Gonzales 1922; Goodwine 1998; Pollitzer 1999; Turner 1949; Twining and Baird 1991), how could it be that so many excavations in the Lowcountry were conducted without a consideration of whether the actors represented by the material remains were Gullah individuals? Would this oversight affect site interpretations based on archaeological findings? And if so, was there a means of remedying the situation? How could a site be identified as Gullah, rather than subsumed under the broader heading of African or African American?

The Ferguson Road tract, as a place “known” to have been occupied historically by African Americans, becomes an ideal case study for looking at how a consideration of a Gullah presence could explain or enhance an archaeological interpretation. I designed a research program guided by the questions listed on page 2, with the intention of developing a methodology that would enable archaeologists to consider Gullah culture as an analytical construct through which to interpret African American sites in the South Carolina Lowcountry. I planned to first establish the Ferguson Road Tract as a historically known residence of Gullah individuals, through conducting interviews with current residents of the property and descendants of historic owners. I wanted to augment this background with interviews of other members of the Gullah community, which could be analyzed and coded for aspects of Gullah cultural expression that could be tangibly identified in the material remains. With that accomplished, the Ferguson Road Tract artifact assemblage could be used as representative of a Gullah assemblage. This collection could then be compared to that of a definitively non-Gullah site in order to lay the foundations for a “Gullah Artifact Pattern”.

These initial plans were quickly thwarted, however, when oral accounts yielded unexpected results. Interviews with Ms. Minerva [Brown] King, Dr. Millicent Brown, and Mr. Arthur Brown universally denied any knowledge of a Gullah presence on the property in their living memory or passed down through family stories. While Minerva and Millicent lived in downtown Charleston, they visited their family property on the Ferguson Road Tract frequently throughout their childhood, and spent nearly every summer of their youth on the island. In all this time, neither sister recalls having interacted with any Gullah individuals, despite an acknowledgement of their grandmother's wide and complex local social network. Arthur Brown (b. 1946) lived on James Island (less than one mile from the Ferguson Road Tract sites) until his teens, and does not claim a Gullah identity, or recall having seen any Gullah populations on the island. This did not bode well for establishing the material culture remains collected by TRC as a Gullah collection.

Furthermore, my efforts to locate material correlates through interviews with self-identifying Gullah individuals were similarly unfruitful. I faced difficulties in locating individuals to interview, and further challenges when interviews I had scheduled were repeatedly cancelled. In the few interviews I was able to complete with self-identifying Gullah members, I was not able to identify any specific references to use of material items in relation to cultural expression.

Rather than entirely foregoing my efforts, however, these setbacks presented new research questions that led me towards alternatively interesting queries. As current literature suggests that there was indeed a historic Gullah presence on James Island at or near the area surrounding the Ferguson Road Tract (Bonstelle and Buxton 2008,

Campbell 2010, Frazier 2006, Preservation Consultants 1989), why was it not appearing in the initial interviews I had conducted? What could explain the disparities between the oral and written accounts? These discrepancies also sparked my interest in the dynamic nature of the meaning of places and aroused my curiosity regarding the story of the Ferguson Road Tract property. How does the oral historical denial of a Gullah identity fit in with the story of the property? As suggested by Barnes and Steen (2012b) Gullah populations of the South Carolina Lowcountry have undergone a series of transformations over the past three centuries; could the social ramifications of these transformations account for the discrepancies between the oral and written records relating to the Ferguson Road Tract? If indeed the property was not historically occupied by Gullah individuals, who did live on this property, and how did they fit in and interact with their physical and social environment? What other historical, geographical, and social forces contributed to the formation of these environments, and affected their experiences on James Island? How did the lives of these past individuals lead to the situation of the property today? And finally, how do modern occupants of the land, as stakeholders, interact with the story of the land? What role do, and should, these stakeholders play in an interpretation of the property's story? This thesis will present a multidisciplinary framework for researching African American archaeological sites in the South Carolina coastal region that may be used as a template for future African American Lowcountry sites.

In the following chapters, I explore the Ferguson Road Tract as a place that tells a story, and investigate the best means of obtaining the most complete telling of such a story. In Chapter Two I outline the historical background of the area, setting the stage

by presenting the political and social climate in which historic occupants lived, in addition to providing the theoretical background which influenced the generation of research questions and design of research strategy. Chapter Three provides the framework of the methodological techniques I employed in order to gather data that would contribute to the story of the Ferguson Road Tract. Chapters Four, Five, and Six provide a summary breakdown of data acquired grouped by data type (documentary records, artifact assemblage, and oral accounts, respectively), followed by an analysis of how these data contribute to the story of the project area. Within these three chapters the data are also contextualized through a discussion of the necessity of incorporating a variety of data source types in a historical archaeological investigation, as well as the importance of stakeholder inclusion throughout the research process. Finally, Chapter Seven explains the importance of observations made throughout this thesis research in relation to interpreting identity via historical archaeology, and highlights the potential for future research endeavors at the Ferguson Road Tract.

Chapter 2

Historical and Theoretical Positioning

Regional History

The Ferguson Road Tract sites are situated on James Island, one of the Sea Islands that are located in Charleston County, part of the South Carolina Lowcountry. The Lowcountry is comprised of a series of terraced tidal flats, all with an elevation at or near sea level, that were formed as a result of oscillations in Pleistocene sea levels (Soller and Mills 1991). The islands are separated from each other and the mainland by a series of rivers, streams, tidal creeks and inlets, and salt marshes. The Lowcountry experiences a subtropical climate with hot, humid summers (which tend to be the wettest season) and mild, dry winters (Miller 1971). During the Colonial period, English settlers wreaked havoc on the environment, dramatically reducing the biodiversity of the area, engaging enslaved labor in vast clearing projects, demolishing large areas of Lowcountry swamps and forests to make way for the substantial agricultural fields required for mass cash crop production (Edelson 2007, Grunden 2011).

Human occupation of the Southeast United states has a dynamic history, and the Lowcountry of South Carolina provides a particularly good window into the story of this occupation. When the English Lords Proprietors attempted to stake their claim to Carolina land granted them by King Charles II (Edelson 2006) they found not a serene, virgin territory ripe for the arrival of newcomers, but rather an environment already shaped by the complex social interactions between the Spanish explorers who had been in

the area since the early sixteenth century, and Native American groups who had inhabited the region for millennia (Dobyns 1983, Ferguson 1992). As English ships arrived from Barbados bringing English colonists, Barbadian planters, and enslaved Africans, they contributed to the social complexity already present between Europeans and Native Americans. The English colonists, for example, quickly learned the lucrative advantages of the “Indian Trade”, and soon joined the Spanish in profiting from the trade in furs, and even the Native Americans themselves (Rowland et al. 1996). Despite ordinances passed by the Lords Proprietors that forbid the sale and export of Native Americans, a local group known as the Westo continued to provide Native American slaves to Carolina colonists for sale in both New England and the Caribbean (Bowne 2005, Gallay 2002, Grunden 2011). This sale of native slaves served as a (if not *the*) primary source of income for at least the first twenty years of the existence of the Carolina colony (Crane 1971), some even argue as much as the first fifty years (Gallay 2002).

By the mid to late eighteenth century, interactions between Native Americans and European colonists had quite radically altered the human populations of the area. Some went so far as to suggest that the Native American presence was almost entirely erased from the landscape; it is likely, however, that this was not actually the case. In fact, the increase of sale and migration of Natives as slaves to the West Indies along with “disease, and interbreeding, particularly with the black slaves served gradually to remove Indian identity from the greater public conscience, leading to a misperception that the local Indians disappeared. Among the African American population Native American antecedents were known and are acknowledged to the present day” (Grunden 2011: 4).

Although perhaps not so overtly visible, that Native American presence continued at least to some degree in the Lowcountry.

Soon after the initial settlement of Charles Towne in 1670 Africans and African Americans became the majority (albeit surely a suppressed majority) of the population in the Lowcountry of South Carolina, and remained so until well into the twentieth century (Barnes and Steen 2012b; Klingberg 1975; Preservation Consultants 1989; Wood 1974). While exact population statistics are not available, indeed, as seen in Figure 1, Governor James Moore “reported in 1720 that there were 210 taxpayers (among an estimated white population of 1,050) and 2,493 slaves in St. Andrew’s Parish (of which James Island was then a part) and 201 taxpayers (among an estimated white population of 1,005) and 1,634 slaves in St. Paul’s Parish (of which Johns Island was then a part). Slaves made up 70% of the estimated total population of 3543 persons in St. Andrew’s and 62% of the estimated total of 2639 in St. Paul’s” (Preservation Consultants 1989: 13). As indicated by the hatched section of the population pie chart in Figure 2.1, a very small percentage of Native Americans were identified at this time. This may be confounded, however, by the regulation that a child’s status follows that of his mother; should a free Native American man have had a child with an enslaved African woman, the child will be enslaved, and then may well be considered to be only of African American descent. The high ratio of black to white residents continued through at least the mid-nineteenth century, at which time census records indicate that of the total of 12 parishes that comprised the Charleston District in 1850, 33.8% of the population was white, 60.9% were slaves, and 5.3% were “free colored” (Grunden 2006, Preservation Consultants 1992). While this takes into account the variation present in the city, it is

highly likely that among the remoteness of James Island this ratio was further amplified, with a much greater proportion of African and African American residents (see oral accounts in Chapter 6).

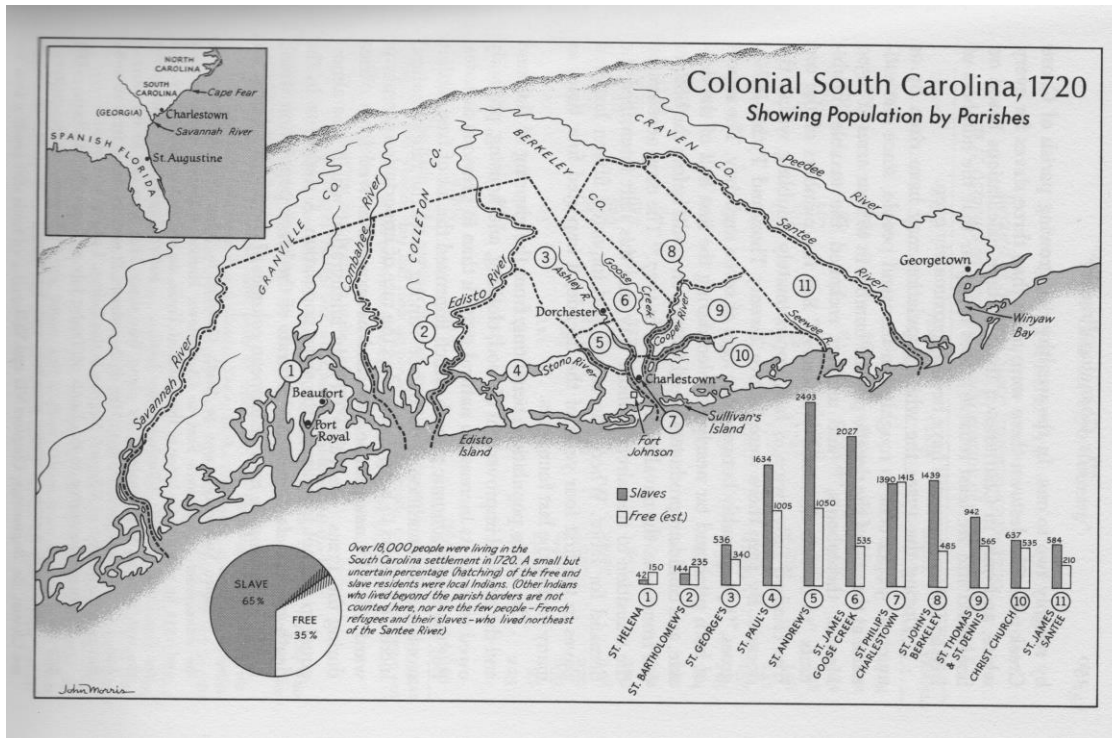


Figure 2.1: 1720 Charleston Population by Parish. From Wood 1996.

The overwhelming majority of the black colonists at this time were enslaved laborers, forcibly brought to the colony from the West Indies (many through Barbados), and some directly from Africa (Barnes and Steen 2012b; Preservation Consultants 1989). Of those brought directly from Africa, “[. . .] South Carolina blacks predominantly were [from] the Windward Coast (Ghana and Sierra Leone), the Senegal-Gambia region, and the Congo-Angola region” (Joyner, 1985; Preservation Consultants 1989: 13). Among the slave purchasing planters, there seemed to be preferences for Africans acquired from specific regions, with particular character traits seeming to be geographically ascribed. Indeed, Henry Laurens, a slaving merchant, wrote in a correspondence that “The slaves

from the River Gambia are prefer'd to all others with us save the Gold Coast," adding that there "must not be a Callabar among them." To another he wrote, "Gold Coast or Gambias are best; next to them the windward coast are prefer'd to Angolas." (Littlefield 1991: 9). While slaves from both the region of Senegambia and present-day Ghana were preferred, records indicate that in actuality more were imported from Senegambia than Ghana (Littlefield 1991), and despite Laurens' voiced preference against them, a substantial amount were also acquired from the Angola region (Barnes and Steen 2012a; Carney 2001). Africans from these areas were likely selected and preferred for their agricultural skills and knowledge, and many were sent to South Carolina Lowcountry rice (Carney 2001; Joyner 1985) and cotton plantations (Carney 2001; NPS 2005; Rosengarten 1986; Seabrook 1824).

Emergence of a Gullah Culture

When considering the evolution of founding African American cultural populations into what they are today, we must remember their evolution from this original conglomeration of disparate cultural groups. Although brought to live and work in South Carolina against their will, enslaved Africans did not come to the new continent entirely empty-handed. Indeed, "The slave did not arrive in America [culturally] naked. He brought with him a sense of sedentary life and of agriculture, while his wife brought a concept of domesticity . . . He brought as well culinary recipes, a sense of dietary balance. . . medical formulas and plants unknown in America" (Mauro 1964: 217). In other words, each immigrating African brought with him or herself the learned culture of their homeland. When individuals from Senegambia, Ghana, Angola, and other regions

were brought to live together on Lowcountry plantations, we see the evolution of Gullah culture as not just the perseverance of a single African culture, but rather a diverse mix of cultures and languages of peoples from widely varying environments and backgrounds (Barnes and Steen 2012a, 2012b; Campbell 2010; Crook 2001; Daise 2002; Goodwine 1998; Gonzales 1922; Jarret and Lucas 2002; Mitchell 2005; National Park Service 2005; Opala 1986; Pollitzer 1998, 1999; Singleton 2010; Steen and Barnes 2010; Turner 1949).

Enslaved populations of the coastal Lowcountry rice and cotton plantations were overseen through a method known as the Task System (as opposed to the alternative Gang System). Groups and individuals were assigned daily tasks by the overseer, and had to continue working until the task was complete; anyone who completed the task before the day was over could then decide what to do with the rest of their time. The economics of the Task System allowed Africans the possibility of maintaining their own cultural and spiritual beliefs (Barnes and Steen 2012a, 2012b; Crook 2001; Edelson 2006; Isenbarger 2006; Jarret and Lucas 2002). Through the strict dichotomy of the “slave’s time” vs. “master’s time”, Crook (2001) suggests the system may have more easily permitted the creation and necessary maintenance of a uniquely African diasporic culture. He argues that this manner of dividing time was most consistent with a native African’s concept of non-linear, repetitive time thereby more easily being adapted by the enslaved individual. A second beneficial consequence of the task system, as cited by Crook, is the flexibility of the structure of internal activity areas. The organization of enslaved housing formed a common space, wherein they went generally undisturbed, as activities conducted in the common space were done on “slave’s time”. These activities, therefore, would be more likely to retain traces of their African origins, and would not have to be

filtered or hidden. This system would be more flexible to the development and maintainability of a new culture, which is by definition a learned phenomenon. Through the task system, he observes, in their unsupervised “slave time”, the enslaved Africans were able to teach their cultural beliefs and practices to their children without fear of being chastised or punished, allowing for a much greater retention rate of cultural practices from one generation to the next.

While conditions of slavery in the Lowcountry were certainly horrible, having a functional knowledge of rice agriculture enabled enslaved Africans to negotiate some conditions of labor (Carney 2001). Despite this limited autonomy, plantation slaves were still forced to hide their cultural beliefs and spiritual practices from the overseer’s gaze. Thus, Crook (2001) notes that “Gullah developed as a creative adaptation to conditions of chattel bondage during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries within the particular economic system that emerged on the tidewater plantations of South Carolina and Georgia” (24). While such creative adaptations may have been little more than survival mechanisms in antiquity, they have carried through to Gullah culture today. The Gullah language, as observed by Turner (1949) served the dual purpose of providing both a bonded inclusivity (through exclusion of those who could not understand the language) and a protection for communication of forbidden topics within an overseer’s presence. A more symbolic example of resistance can be seen through the artistic representation of stick pounding. Originally employed as a substitute for drumming to communicate hidden messages under the master’s gaze (DeMore 2008) stick pounding today serves as a venue for artistic expression. The art of stick pounding provides entertainment to others while conveying a cultural message from the past.

After the Civil War, Gullah populations underwent a series of assimilations, beginning with that of the Gullah population into the general southern black society (Jarret and Lucas 2002; Wheaton and Garrow 1985.). At this point, many African Americans, Gullahs included, engaged in a series of out-migrations, moving north in an attempt to avoid prejudice and racism (Barnes and Steen 2012a; Harrison 1992; Jarret and Lucas 2002; Millicent Brown personal communications 2012). As land and place are of particular importance in Gullah culture, however, many did remain at home in the Sea Islands. This may have been quite detrimental for the group, however, as bridges were built, the Sea Islands connected and commercialized, and Gullah people were further marginalized. As new development brought about segregation and more prejudice, many Gullah became ashamed of their culture, abandoned or denied it, and adapted the culture of the new colonizing groups (Barnes and Steen 2012a; Campbell 2010; Chandler 2008; Goodwine 1998; Minis 1998; Steen 2010).

Theoretical Orientation of Researching Identity

Before we can analyze aspects of present day Gullah culture, we must consider the basics of identity formation in order to contextualize it in a broader cultural framework. Identity is an extremely complex topic to consider anthropologically, yet its analysis is crucial in conducting a holistically inclusive study of a population. Franz Boas (1920) posited three traits that can be examined in considering the composition of a group's cultural identity: environmental conditions, psychological factors, and historical connections. Given that I have summarized both the environmental and historical factors above, we can now begin to consider the psychological factors that are at play. These

psychological factors, particularly when considering African American populations in the Carolina Lowcountry, may take the form of external forces that at once passively and actively guide identity formation. Living on white-owned plantations in constant fear of an overseer's punishments in reaction to cultural displays, we would expect to see a sense of identity develop in reaction to, and in spite of, such conditions.

Considering the reality of enslaved African communities in the Lowcountry as being melded of various diasporic groups (see discussion above), it is necessary to remember the influence that the multiple origins of population members will have on the formation of identity (Matory 2006). Individual and population origins, as well as locations of their new settlements, emphasize the importance of space and place in studies of African and African American communities. Given the violent manner in which they were wrenched from their homeland, extreme turbulence of the journey to the New World, and harsh conditions of the new servitude into which they were thrown, memories of place and current adaptations to new space may be the only tangibles available in generating a strong individual or group identity.

This group identity would certainly be affected by, and likely reflect, interactions with other cultural groups encountered. Considering the interactions of Africans and African Americans with Native Americans and Europeans, James Island, and all of the South Carolina Lowcountry, represents a location that can serve as prime example of cultural entanglement. A common misconception concerning studies of cultural entanglement presents the arrangement in such a way as to suggest always a relationship of a master group versus a victim group (Silliman 2005). It is substantially more likely, however, that multiple cultural agents interacted with a certain degree of

equality; not social equality, of course, but in a way that would present equal representation of cultural input. If this is indeed true, we would expect to see equal, or near-equal, representations in these newly-established conceptions of space and material culture in the archaeological record. Again, that is not to suggest, however, that such representation should equate to social or economic status. Enslaved Africans, for instance, while having little to no political or social autonomy, archaeologically will still be seen through influences of their European captors and Native American neighbors. In other words, while European influences would be expected at an African or African American site, European artifacts of a high value would not be. While an African American site and a non-African American site may contain the same material culture, the ratios of the objects that material culture comprises and the ways they were used, modified, and located can convey apparent cultural differences.

Extended and in-depth interactions with outside cultures can have extreme effects upon individual and group cultural identity, particularly in the wake of a dramatic diaspora, sometimes as acute as the generation of new cultures. The discussion of interactions between African/African American and Native Americans is addressed by James Sweet (2011), who argues that once disembedded from their original habitats, as the Gullah were when they were removed from their African homeland, these dislocated people were searching for any connections or evidence of “sameness” they could find, thereby generating a “deep-level” set of cultural rules and principles. In this situation, culture served, according to Sweet, as a “collective rallying point” against separations, and the concept of individuality was viewed as an enemy. Considering Gullah populations, this again reinforces the possibility that the evolution of their culture may be

the result of an adaptive strategy for resistance (Carney 2001; Crook 2001). By unifying with local Native American populations, the Gullah would gain a practical ally with whom they could work together for both physical and cultural survival.

As both Africans and Native Americans were subjected to similar negative external European pressures, it is likely that the two groups may have bonded over common situations, as a resistive strategy beneficial to both (Forbes 2007). Faced with substantial imposed violence and forced into subservience, as marginalized populations both groups would have benefitted from an alliance, which may likely result in various cultural mergers. Indeed, many scholars agree that Gullah communities exhibit great degrees of cultural diversity as the result of repeated creolizations and multicultural interactions (Crook 2001, Pollitzer 1999, Steen and Barnes 2010). This cultural diversity, still seen today, could clearly have developed as a resistance strategy against European oppression, and survived through today in response to forces of continued oppression and marginalization.

Theoretical Positioning of Considerations of Space

Discussions of space, such as the multivocality and multilocality within space, or a particular landscape (Rodman 1992), must be included in an exploration of identity, particularly when considering spaces occupied by multiple cultural groups. In this way, spaces are not dormant, static locations, but rather an interactive background upon which cultural identity can be forged (Escobar 2001, Rodman 1992).

The spaces in which Africans and African Americans found themselves in the South Carolina Lowcountry were not static, passive entities, but rather, “they can be

imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings” (Massey 1993: 66). It was these spaces of occupation that actively engaged individuals’ careful negotiation of social relationships in their new environments.

If we think of space as more than just its physical representation, we can look to its meaning in terms of a more ephemeral, local or global level. David Scott (1991) asks, “What space do Africa and slavery occupy in the political economy of local discourse?” (279). The immediate answer to this question requires a number of clarifications—in what time? According to whom? Do the politics of this discourse change depending upon the specific socio-economic group to whom they are referring? As the response to each of those subquestions reframe the way occupation of a space is viewed, it follows that there exists a certain amount of variation among this local discourse, which could, in turn, alter present day realities. Such discourse, then, becomes an ideal focal point of research concerned with effects of Africanisms on contemporary life (Price 2006).

In Gullah communities, for instance, particular spaces have been inhabited by one cultural group and their descendants for long periods of time. In many communities, descendants currently live on the same land, and sometimes even in the same buildings, where their ancestors were enslaved. It is quite likely, therefore, that a particular place has contributed politically to the ideological beliefs of the group over time.

Whitney Battle-Baptiste initiates an open dialogue on the “intersectionality of race, gender, and class in the story of the American past” (Battle-Baptiste 2011: 164), and in doing so forces the confrontation of the same issues in the present. This observation reminds us that African American identity did not evolve solely in terms of racial

pressures, but rather faced a plethora of dynamic external cultural obstacles. Considering the evolution and maintenance of identity in the face of this multitude of layers when interpreting a space through an archaeological lens, we may find a way to empower more marginalized voices that have been trapped in the past.

Africans and African Americans have faced enslavement, racism, prejudice, and marginalization since, and before, arrival in The Americas. As captive slaves, Africans were forced to comply with the bidding of their European enslavers. As liberated or free in the mid-nineteenth century, African Americans were forced to tolerate the racist treatment of their past enslavers and hostile neighbors. After emancipation, and well into the twentieth century, African Americans were forced to reinvent their identity and establish a venue in the socio-political climate of the United States with only the lenses and media of those who had perpetrated their torment for so long (DuBois 2001 [1903], Skinner 1999). Only recently have African Americans been able to publicly reclaim their African heritage, and present a view of themselves through non-Western lenses. Throughout this oppression and prejudice, Gullah populations have developed and maintained a richly diverse culture by resisting external pressures and holding fast to their heritage. This heritage, as the way that a society or culture conceives of the stories of its own history (Barnes and Steen 2012a; Leone 1987; Lowenthal 1997; Shackle and Chambers 2004), has been a powerful tool on the path to reclaiming this hidden cultural expression. The struggle has not been easy, however, and Gullah communities have been waning throughout time. With an increase in scholarship of Gullah populations, and by highlighting discoveries of a Gullah culture, we will be able to, in a sense, call out to

long-lost descendants who may be searching for connections to their past, and provide an aspect of identity that has been taken.

Amid the context of any diaspora, the migratory group, especially if moved by force, is subjected to a turbulent shift in cultural environment. Considering Foucault's definitions of power and violence (1976), it quickly becomes apparent that all Africans and African Americans included in the African diaspora were subjected to some degree of structural violence, the Gullah people being no exception. Gullah communities have been repeatedly subjugated and marginalized, kept on the periphery of the American economy and social structure. In relation to such structural violence, Fanon (1961) (and others in the discussion above) suggests ideas of particular cultures evolving as response to, and as a form of resistance against, the constant duality of a need to escape the pressures of whiteness while simultaneously unable to return to Africa. In a sense, such cultural identity formations could be a way of making life bearable by bringing Africa to America.

So Where are the Gullah?

Highlighting the significant lack of archaeological investigations conducted of Gullah populations, Steen and Barnes (2010) allude to the repeated marginalization of these groups and individuals. Not only have they been prejudiced against, manipulated, and essentially bullied, but have been nearly silent in the archaeological record. Charging the archaeological community with amending this situation, they discuss aspects of Gullah culture, and hypothesize what such a presence might look like archaeologically.

They begin by stressing the importance of place and community among Gullah groups. After emancipation, these African Americans of the Lowcountry sea islands did not want to leave their land, and in most cases did not have to, initially, as the white planter families fled the islands. Many Gullah and African American families continued living on the same land where they had been enslaved (Barnes and Steen 2012b; Campbell 2010; Franklin 1961; Steen 2010). For the archaeological record, this suggests that one would be expected to find evidence of lengthy habitations in particular areas, with land continually passed down within one family.

As a second major point of study and focus among Gullah populations of the Lowcountry, Steen and Barnes call for a focus on the study of ceramics as being particularly fruitful for an identification of uniquely Gullah habitations. Lowcountry colonowares, although positive identification techniques and methods of interpretation are still hotly debated among the field (see for examples Brilliant 2011; Cobb and DePratter 2012; Cooper and Smith 2007; Galke 2009; Joseph 2007; Mouer et al. 1999; Singleton and Bograd 2000), are plentiful in the region. Produced by African Americans, these wares highlight particular African American traditions while emphasizing aspects of intercultural relations. As such, this colonoware is a valuable resource which must be analyzed in order to gain a greater understanding of the cultural aspects of Lowcountry African American habitations.

As African Americans have faced repeated and on-going exclusion and marginalization it is extremely important to counter such attitudes with the transparency of conducting African American Archaeology in a public, community-based setting (Steen and Barnes 2010). As a large part of African American culture revolves around

individuals' relationship to and with the past, so should the study of it. As McDavid (1997: 1) notes, "the descendants of the people being studied archaeologically live in the same community in which their ancestors were enslaved, in which descendants of their enslavers still live, and in which both groups of descendants continue to negotiate issues of power and control". By including Gullah individuals in archaeological endeavors, we can facilitate a dialog between present day people and their ancestors. Barbara Little (2007) highlights the importance of conducting a public archaeology as it can empower community members to make historically informed judgments about the past. She introduces the idea of "sankofa", an Akan (Ghana) word that refers to the concept of reclaiming the past and understanding how the present came to be so that we can move forward (Little 2007: 15). In the context within which it was derived, sankofa implies the individual or cultural group involved in the reclamation of this past, not strictly a group of academics. Therefore, it follows that through an engagement of contemporary community influence, we will be able to outline additional details and establish a more complete memory of the past.

This torch is taken up as well by Antoinette Jackson (2012), who has conducted a critical analysis of issues pertaining to heritage interpretation and presentation at Antebellum plantation sites. She notes community engagement and collaboration is crucial in an interpretation of heritage, especially one that is going to be publically displayed. Including stories of slave descendants' heritage interpretations within the Gullah/Geechee corridor helps to further branch out from a tale that was historically controlled by the plantation owner. This community-based research will also help to differentiate the Gullah population as a unique subset of African American

culture, which is essential in identifying and protecting Gullah cultural identity (Steen and Barnes 2010). Lumping all African American cultures under one common heading creates an artificial homogeneity to Lowcountry culture, presenting a false record, and in essence contributing to the continued marginalization of Gullah people.

It was not until the early twentieth century that Gullah was seen to be its own unique cultural subset, worthy of academic research, when it caught the attention of Lorenzo Dow Turner. One of the first academics to systematically investigate Gullah culture through language (Wade-Lewis 2007), “Turner immersed himself in the Gullah culture, he knew for sure that the old theories about Gullah were wrong. What he found were grammatical constructions and words that had nothing to do with English and that he believed were of African origin” (Amos 2011: 10).

A recent study conducted by the National Park Service highlights the continued silence and invisibility of African American voices in the present. As a part of its endeavor to determine whether the National Park Service should maintain an active role in the preservation of Gullah culture sites, the United States Congress authorized the Low Country Gullah Special Resource Study under the Interior Appropriations Act of 2000 (which would eventually contribute to Congress’s establishment of the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor in 2006). The study concluded that sites of Gullah/Geechee culture meet the National Park Service’s qualifications determining suitability for addition to their system, and by association are deemed to be of national significance. As part of this study for the National Park Service several focus groups were conducted involving local residents in an effort to ascertain local opinions and concerns of such research.

Even among digital media sources, Gullah culture seems to have been presented with a backdrop of subtle political underpinnings. Created to educate young children on the wide expanse of Gullah culture, the television show “Gullah Gullah Island” aired from 1996-1999, starring Ron and Natalie Daise. A self-proclaimed fourth generation Gullah descendant himself, Ron Daise explains the intentions of he and his wife through the show, noting “We're grateful for our involvement in altering negative perceptions about a culture we hold dear” (Daise 2002). At first appearance Daise (along with the cast and crew responsible for the show’s production) is successful in achieving his goal: the television show brings to light a culture that the majority of American children would not otherwise have seen, and does so in a seemingly friendly yet informative way. Gullah festivals, ideals, language, etc. are explained at a level that children can understand, multicultural interactions and friendships are encouraged, and an overall sense of positive group identity is conveyed.

With a more critical read of several episodes of the television show, however, it becomes apparent that older audience members may perceive conflicting messages. For instance, the theme song that introduces every episode features the main stars of the show merrily singing, yet suggests a certain exaggeration of the of the land the characters inhabit. The backdrop presented behind the human characters is animated and represented as a fictional fairytale-esque land where trees dance, houses fly through the air, and objects have been personified and given bright colors that differ from reality. To a young child this may set the stage for a warm, welcoming, and comfortable locale, however an older audience may perceive the setting as a fictional place that does not exist in reality. Taken one step further, this might imply that “Gullah Island” does not really

exist, but is merely an imaginary place in the mind of children. This generates a potentially uncomfortable parallel to the Jim Crow era (and beyond) shaming of Gullah and other African American descendants (Barnes and Steen 2012b; Daise 2002, Goodwine 1998, Millicent Brown and Minerva King personal communication April 14, 2012) leading many to deny the existence of a genuine Gullah culture and any associated identities.

One episode of the television show in particular appears exceptionally troubling in terms of the message older viewers may take away. “Binyah the Barbarian”, airing in 1995, stars the family’s pet polliwog, named Binyah. Taken from Gullah language, a ‘bin yah’ refers to a native individual, a person who has been in a location before newcomers arrived (Bin Yah 2008). In “Gullah Gullah Island”, Binyah the polliwog serves as a symbolic representation of the Gullah people who have been on the sea islands. It is interesting to note, therefore, that a polliwog, the form chosen for this representation, is a creature in transition, an adolescent in between the stages of childhood and adulthood. This implies a certain degree of unsophistication of Gullah culture, and perhaps even a people that have not yet reached the full potential of their maturity. Indeed, the storyline of this particular episode presents the rude, uneducated, almost vulgar polliwog. The children of the family proceed to “fix” the poor creature, and teach him “proper manners” so that he can blend into the larger society. Regardless of the writers’ intentions, this episode presents an uncanny resemblance to the silencing of Gullah culture that occurred in the mid-late twentieth century (Millicent Brown and Minerva King personal communication April 14, 2012), and suggests that in order for

Gullah individuals to fit into society they must be educated by society and conform to popular norms.

Perhaps one explanation of such negative perceptions of Gullah populations results from their missing presence in circles of research. By answering Barnes' and Steen's call to incorporate a consideration of Gullah populations into archaeological endeavors, we may be able to begin taking steps to counteract surprising silence regarding the cultural group in archaeological investigations that continues today despite the increase of Gullah scholarship in the past several years.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

Shortly after being introduced to the Ferguson Road Tract project, I met with Millicent Brown, one of the landowners of the property. Though not an archaeologist herself, Millicent and her family were excited about the excavation that had been conducted of their property, and eager to be involved in further interpretation of the materials. In an initial meeting with Millicent, I was informed that the family had recently discovered an interesting connection in their ancestry. Julia Ferguson, great-grandmother to the Brown Family and the person for whom Ferguson Road is named, was an African American woman reported to have had two children (one of whom is the Brown's great-grandfather) with renowned white confederate soldier William Godber Hinson. Despite the fact that this relationship is not present in the historical documentation, it was known by the son of Julia and William, Arthur Brown⁵ (b. 1884), and at least several members of the community (see Frazier 2006). This relationship introduces the complexities, always inherent in investigations of identity, that are manifested in the Ferguson Road Tract sites.

Just like the many varied branches of the live oak tree, the field of historical archaeology is uniquely situated with access to a plethora of varying branches of data sources, such as artifact and feature remains, historic plats, maps, census records, probate

⁵ To minimize confusion concerning the multiple Arthur Browns in the family, I have indicated year of birth with every reference to either Arthur Brown as a means of clear identification.

records, journal articles, oral histories, living memories, etc. In order to conduct the most comprehensive research, it is necessary to include the greatest possible variety of these sources. In this thesis, I attempt to use these media to determine the underlying story of the Ferguson Road Tract site. To reemphasize from the introduction, my research questions include the following: Who lived on this property, and how did they fit in and interact with their physical and social environment? Does the Ferguson Road Tract represent a Gullah habitation, and how did the occupants of this site interact with and adapt to an evolving Gullah cultural identity? And finally, how do modern occupants of the land, as stakeholders, interact with the story of the land? What role do, and should, these stakeholders play in an interpretation of the property's story?

To answer these questions, I focus on three specific research methods: historical documentary research, artifact analysis, and inclusion of oral histories from family descendants and current property owners, as well as a self-identified Gullah previous resident of the Lowcountry. Due to time and project scale constraints, I have focused specifically on conducting a detailed analysis of the later historical portion of this site's occupation (roughly the early nineteenth through mid-twentieth centuries), although the archaeological data do suggest there were several earlier isolated occupations of the site. In each section of this chapter I will describe my methodology for the specific analytical tools, present findings, and provide a brief discussion of how those results fit into the larger overall story of events at the Ferguson Road Tract site.

Documentary Research

Of all data consulted during research, I will first discuss the documentary evidence available. I was able to extract information from a variety of historical documents available, including historic maps and plats (maps drawn to scale indicating property boundaries or the divisions of a piece of land), census records, birth certificates, death certificates, personal wills, property deeds of sale, and historic interviews. In an attempt to discern who owned and occupied the site in question, I looked to uncover historical plats and deeds of the area. By ascertaining the inhabitants of the area, a more meaningful interpretation may be pulled from the assemblage. As is the case with many historical sites of the Lowcountry area, large quantities of informative, reliable documentary evidence can be challenging to come by (Hamilton 2007). Africans and African Americans of the South Carolina Lowcountry represent an extremely marginalized group. According to census records and oral accounts, a vast majority of Africans and African Americans living in the Lowcountry region from the beginning of occupation throughout at least the mid-nineteenth century were not literate, and therefore did not maintain records of their populations. Particularly during the time of slavery, documentation that does exist concerning enslaved Africans and African Americans does not include much specific information such as names or identity, but rather often provides just brief mentions of unnamed individuals. Births, deaths, and marriages among these populations were frequently not documented. Additionally, many historical documents were destroyed as a consequence of damage associated with Civil War, as well as various fires, including the famous Charleston fire of 1838 which leveled “at least one-fourth of

the centre of our beautiful and flourishing city” (Charleston Mercury, 1 May 1838) and severe earthquake of 1886 (Hayes 1978).

I began my search with plats that had been previously located by the cultural resource management firm TRC, in conjunction with information gathered from interviews with family members (discussed in further detail below) as a starting point to obtain further historical documentation of the property. I conducted a search for, and located, primary and secondary historical sources at the South Caroliniana Library and the South Carolina Department of Archives and History in Columbia, as well as the South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston Library Society, and the Register Mense Conveyance Office in Charleston. I printed copies of any pertinent primary documents (specifically plats that included or were related to the property and last will and testaments of family members) off microfilm collections held at these libraries to facilitate further analysis in comparison with other documents. I conducted a visual analysis of the plats and maps, identifying points of overlay that could confirm the spatial alignment of unlabeled portions. In cases of written primary documents such as last will and testaments and deeds of sale, I took notes from close readings, specifically seeking to identify any mention of material culture associated with the property, as well as particular individuals mentioned by name. I then compared individuals identified in these personal documents with individuals listed in James Island census records in order to determine if there were any correlations between the two.

As historical documents are often most easily found by means of a point of reference, I began my search with data provided during interviews by the Brown family members, which will be discussed in chapter 4. Starting with the known and working

towards the unknown data enabled me to more quickly locate those documents that existed in library collections.

I also interrogated some visual imagery in a consideration of documentation expressed by more contemporary sources. I investigated several episodes of the television show *Gullah Gullah Island* as well as the artwork of Gullah artist Sabree to identify any emerging themes in visual media. This was a very cursory surface analysis to consider perceptions of the viewer, however, and did not delve into the deeper facets of a true media analysis.

Artifact Analysis

On the most basic level, the artifact assemblage provides proof of human occupation at the site. Once we establish that people were indeed present at the site, we can then delve further into the economic and social situations of the occupying groups. The artifact collection also provides an insight into the rich cultural and temporal diversity present at the Ferguson Road Tract sites. All of these factors have the potential to contribute to the story of how past peoples have engaged with the Ferguson Road site, and demonstrate how various factors of their physical and social environments were manifested in the materials of their daily lives. During the course of research for this thesis project, the artifact collection recovered from the Ferguson Road Tract site was being held at the South Carolina State Museum, and all artifact analysis was conducted there. I surveyed the artifacts collected by TRC to look for trends and patterns that could provide evidence pertaining to the occupants of the site. I used the artifact catalog, generated by TRC in Microsoft Excel, to verify artifact types and classifications, and

added an additional column to the spreadsheet to note any discrepancies or additional comments. Using the Excel spreadsheet, I was able to sort and filter searches based on any selected attribute, and could more easily identify categories and patterns. I took detailed photographs of any unique or potentially diagnostic artifacts in order to conduct further research. I also looked for any alterations or modifications to artifacts that could demonstrate personal interactions with an individual, and add to the story of the Ferguson Road Tract property.

Collection of Oral Accounts

The most complete and representative story of a place includes, by definition, the stories of the modern occupants as well. Interviewing modern occupants and family descendants provided information that contributed to the larger story of the Ferguson Road Tract site. Such interviews also demonstrate how stakeholder participation can positively influence archaeological research initiatives and participation.

In order to gain access to modern day views of the past from relevant communities, I conducted a series of interviews in to access current present day memories of the past and gain new perspectives on archaeological data. As the interviews were collected for their use as oral history, it was not necessary to submit to the IRB process. I conducted a total of four formal interviews, three of which were tape recorded⁶. Two interviews were done with individuals, and two were conducted with a pair of interviewees. I took handwritten notes in conjunction with recordings, observing

⁶ I had attempted to record all interviews, however due to technical difficulties the audio file for the interview done with Millicent Brown and Minerva King together was not viable.

particular moments of importance in the interview which I returned to for a more in-depth analysis. I have extensive and detailed notes for the interview with Millicent and Minerva that was not successfully recorded. While interviewing Arthur Brown (b. 1946) we viewed and discussed several primary documents; I included in hand-written notes indications of which document was being observed to later match with the oral account in the transcription. I transcribed all of the recorded interviews (listening to audio through Windows Media Player while simultaneously typing transcription in Microsoft Word), and these transcriptions will be given to the South Caroliniana Library. Considering that the unspoken features of an interview can often contribute significant information (Ritchie 2003), I minimized editorial modifications in generating transcriptions by leaving in utterances and stutters, indicating pauses, and inserting footnote notation regarding any necessary editing or parenthetical clarification. When excerpting quotes from these transcripts for the purposes of discussion in this thesis, however, I did omit some utterances for clarity in making a specific point. Accessing “these oral narratives [of descendant⁷ communities] which should be considered somewhat fluid and open to interpretation, can help [one] to fill in gaps left in the documentary and archaeological records” (DeCorse 2008).

In order to investigate the possibility of the historical occupants representing a Gullah population, I had to maintain an awareness of the complexities of cultural identities. Such complexities would in turn make a cultural identification through material remains quite difficult. In an attempt to overcome this difficulty, I searched for

⁷ Later on in this thesis I propose expanding the limits of who is to be considered a part of the descendant community.

self-identifying Gullah members to interview in an effort to develop material culture correlates for what could be expected for a Gullah habitation.

Chapter 4

Results and Analysis of the Documentary Record

Since the emergence of historical archaeology, there have been numerous discussions concerning what the relationship of archaeology and historical documentary research should look like, and how these relationships differ from reality (for examples see Courtney 1997; Deagan 1982; Hall 2000; Harrington 1955; Little 1994; Orser 2001; Renfrew 1983; Wilkie 2006). Nevertheless, “it is essential that the excavator be aware of these [social, economic, and geographical] characteristics [of the land] and be able to read correctly the story that the ground has to tell him” (Noël Hume 1969: 206). Without the properly fleshed out background knowledge of an area, valuable elements of the story of the ground, as Noël Hume points out, could be overlooked, and many potentially fruitful elements of the archaeological work wasted. Moreover, “Many people do not want a past defined as a scientific resource by us but a past that is a story to be interpreted” (Hodder 1991: 14). Stakeholders in search of connections to a particular place do not want merely a static scientific reading of the ground and its contents, but rather desire a dynamic story in which they will eventually be able to envision themselves playing a part.

It can often be challenging to interpret archaeological data without background historical documentary or ethnographical context clues. When considering a “reading”

of the archaeological record as compared to a reading of the historical documentary texts, Deetz (1983) asserts that it is difficult to interpret the meanings conveyed by objects left in the ground alone. To access this otherwise lost meaning, however, we can consider Wilkie's (2006) solution that "...documentary records and archaeological findings can be quilted together to understand individual past lives as they connect to issues of race, class, and gender" (13). By remembering that texts⁸ themselves are cultural products (Moreland 2006, Little 1992, Hall 2000), we can consider how they reflect, as well as impact, constructions of individual and community identities. If we conceive of texts as artifacts produced in specific and unique cultural-historical contexts (Wilkie 2006) we must acknowledge that they are biased, not simply neutral, objective representations of the past (Collins 1995; Franklin 2002; Hines 2004; Messick 1993; Moreland 2006). In this way, texts, just like their material record counterparts, can be read as "transcripts" of past cultural contexts (Hall 2000). In the following discussion, I will demonstrate how a reading of textual "transcripts" can contribute to an understanding of the physical, cultural, and social climate of the historical Ferguson Road Tract sites, and how such climates impacted its residents.

For archaeologists attempting to determine who owned a particular property, "mundane sources" such as plat maps, conveyance records, and property tax records can often be most helpful (Wilkie 2006). In establishing the historical background for their archaeological investigation of the Ferguson Road Tract, cultural management firm TRC located several plats that pertain to the site (Grunden 2011). These included an 1825

⁸ Throughout this chapter the term "text" is used as a general heading encompassing all variety of documentary records. Whenever a specific 'text' is meant, it will be specifically identified (plat, census record, will, etc.).

survey plat of the area, which suggests that the land in question may have belonged to a man named Samuel Hanahan at the time, and depicts a small settlement in the general area of the project site (for plat see Grunden 2011: 6). This same location, in 1863, is presented on two conflicting Confederate and Union military maps, one depicting the area with a settlement, and another showing only a wooded location (for plat see Grunden 2011: 9). After 1863, the trail went cold for TRC until the land was transferred to Arthur Brown (b. 1884⁹) in the twentieth century (Frazier 2006, Grunden 2011).

Currently, the property that includes the tract of land investigated through archaeological research is owned by Millicent Brown on the west side of Ferguson Road (currently occupied by her sister Minerva [Brown] King), and owned and inhabited by Gregory Brown (brother of Millicent and Minerva) on the east side of Ferguson Road (King and Brown personal communications 2012). This land makes up a portion of the twenty-acre tract formerly owned by Julia Ferguson, as depicted in a 1909 plat (figure 4.1 below) commissioned by her son, Arthur Brown (b. 1884). This plat includes what appear to be five structures very near the project area, suggesting a possible geographical connection to the artifacts recovered¹⁰. Interestingly, on the same day, and by the same survey company, William Hinson (with whom Julia Ferguson had a complex relationship, see discussion below and in chapter 6) had the neighboring property surveyed on behalf of his niece, Mrs. Dill (for copy of plat see appendix).

⁹ Continuing the practice introduced in Chapter 3, I am including the date of birth with any mention of an Arthur Brown to avoid potential confusion of the multiple Arthurs in the Brown family.

¹⁰ Chronologically, the artifacts are suggestive of a possible connection to the structures as well; there are many in the assemblage that date to the mid-late eighteenth and mid nineteenth centuries, however it is not known when the structures depicted on the plat were constructed.

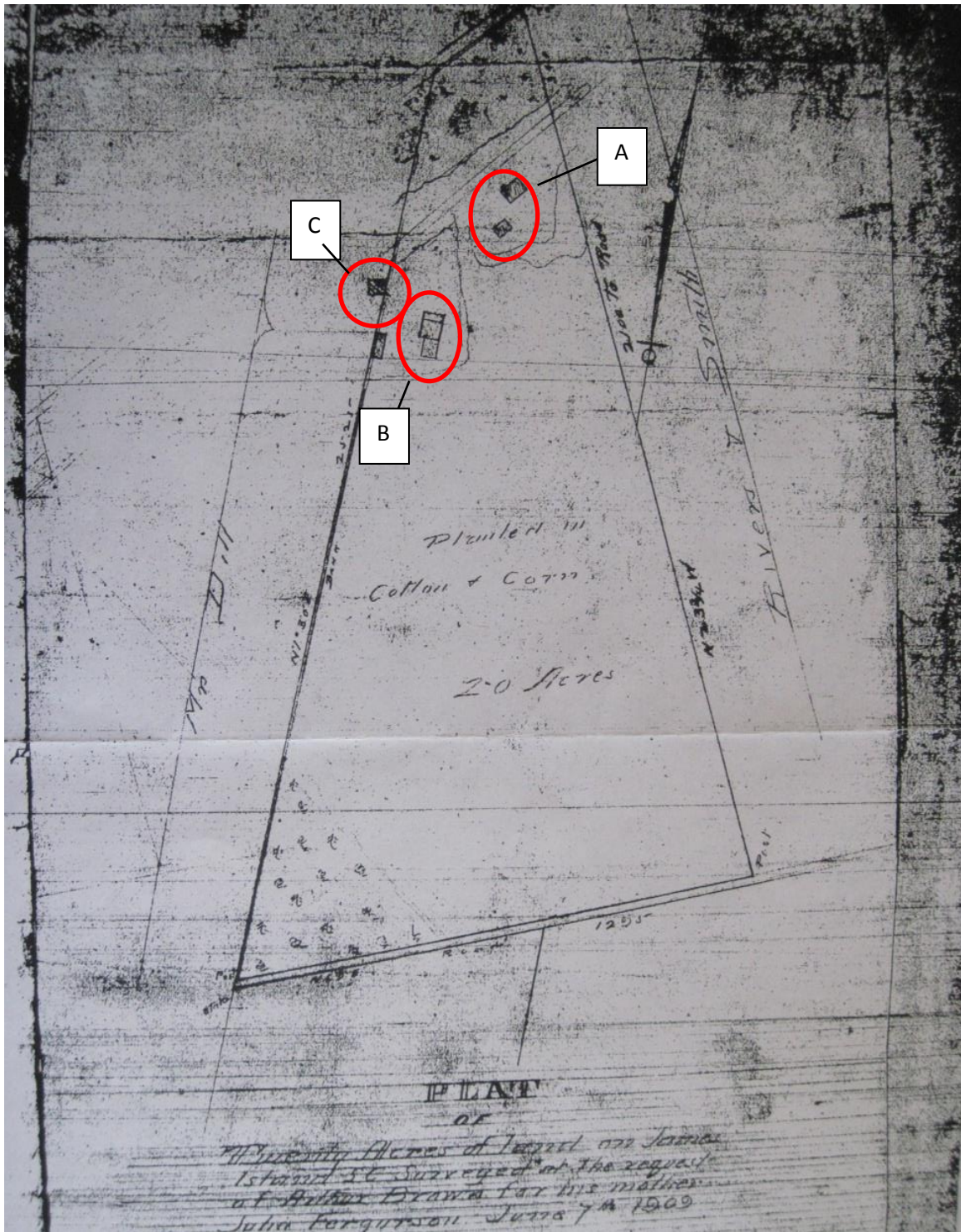


Figure 4.1: 1909 Plat commissioned by Arthur Brown (b. 1884) for mother, Julia Ferguson. Source: Surveyed by Simons Mayrant Co., included in the McCrady Plat collection, accessed at the Dept. of SC Archives.

On the plat of Mrs. Dill's property, there is a small structure indicated very near the border that abuts the property of Julia Ferguson, with an "x" marked through it (labeled "c" in figure 4.1). The same structure is indicated on Julia Ferguson's plat, without the "x". This may suggest either that the structure was demolished and no longer in use, or that ownership of the structure was questioned and determined to belong to Julia Ferguson (which may also explain the timing of the two surveys as intending to resolve an ownership debate). The Dills were a well-established white planter family who owned a significant amount of land on James Island, most notably the Dill [Stono] Plantation. The Dill family left their property by 1862, and after the Civil War sold some of the property to emancipated slaves, and rented other areas as tenant farming communities (Bean 2009) (see figure 4.2 below). Several of these "freedman areas" are directly referred to in historical interviews conducted by Eugene Frazier (Frazier 2006), and will be discussed more in Chapter 6.

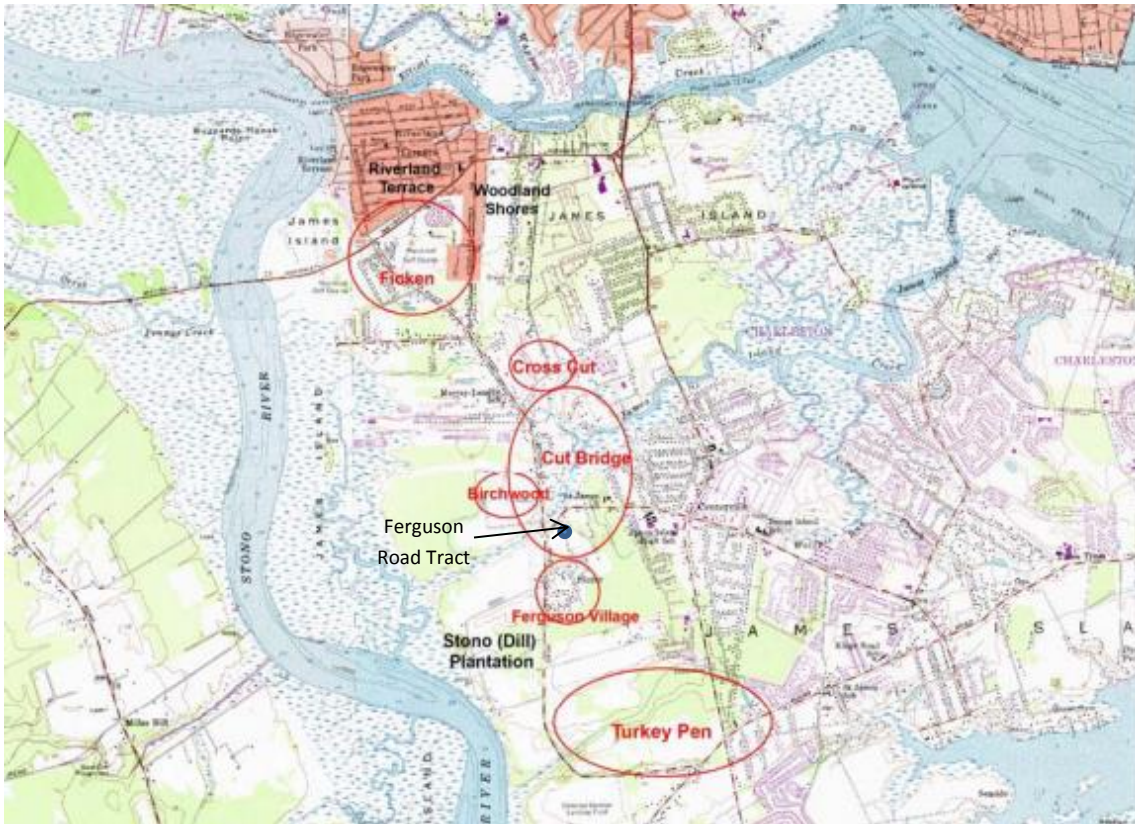


Figure 4.2: Map indicating freedman areas of the former Dill Plantation. From Bean 2009: 13.

According to her will¹¹, upon her death, Julia Ferguson split up her twenty acres among her children, bequeathing the majority of the land to her son Arthur Brown (b. 1884) and daughter Rosalie Brown Myers. According to several 1930 land deeds, provided to me by Arthur Brown (b. 1946), Arthur Brown (b. 1884) purchased several acres and a house from his siblings. Upon his death in 1944, according to an interview with Millicent Brown (discussed in Chapter 6) Arthur Brown (b. 1884) divided his land

¹¹ A copy of which is in possession of Arthur Brown (b. 1946). This will is not currently on file with the SC Department of Archives and History; the author will attempt to work with both parties to make the document more accessible to future researchers.

between his two children, Joseph “J.” Arthur Brown (b. ~1920¹²) (his child with wife Millie Ellison Brown) and Arthurlee Brown McFarland (his child outside of his marriage or with a first wife whose identity is unknown). Arthurlee was very close to Millie Brown, and the Brown family, and eventually gifted her portion of the land to J. Arthur’s children (Millicent Brown, personal communication 2012).

Tracing the land back prior to ownership by Julia Ferguson (see table 4.1 below) proved to be a bit more challenging, and includes some of my own hypotheses. Documents among Arthur Brown’s (b. 1946) collection include a 1905 deed in which Julia purchased 10 acres from Willie Brown. Prior to that, a will of Samuel Ferguson, that came to fruition upon his death in 1889, gave Julia Ferguson (listed as Widow) 5 acres of land, a portion of the property that he purchased from Charles Seele in 1875. Further on in the document, it is stated that the surviving children of Samuel Ferguson sold 6 of the 15 acres that their father left them to Julia for a sum of 5 dollars. This total of 11 acres, combined with the 10 acres purchased from William Brown (more or less, considering there may be some slight inaccuracy of measurements) accounts for the 20 acres drawn on the 1909 plat.

Looking into the deed of sale documenting Samuel Ferguson’s acquisition of the land, we see that he purchased “15 acres more or less” for three hundred dollars from Charles Seele. In his description of the land, Seele indicates that he purchased the tract from Solomon Legare in 1874. The 1874 deed in turn describes the sale to Charles Seele of 41 acres of land in St. Andrew’s Parish (which includes the Ferguson road tract), plus

¹² J. Arthur Brown’s birth year varies by a few years among available historical documents, and for the purposes of this thesis will be considered to be approximately 1920.

250 acres “on the southern extremity of James Island, now known as the Savannah Plantation”, for a total of ten thousand dollars. Legare also indicates that he had previously acquired this land from the Rivers family (and indeed, describes a portion of the 41 acre tract as still being bounded by Rivers property). Finally, a deed of sale dated March 1, 1839 describes the transfer of land from John Rivers to Solomon Legare: “I the said John Rivers have granted bargained sold and released unto the said Solomon Legare all that Plantation or tract of land conveyed by the said Solomon Legare to me situate and being on James Island in the state aformen’d containing four hundred and thirty two acres (432) including marshland [unreadable] bounded to the north by the Cut known as New Town Cut, and land now or late the property of Mrs. Dill, Samuel Hanahan, and the Episcopal church. . .”¹³. I was not able to determine how John Rivers acquired the land, however boundaries he mentions for the property are present on the aforementioned 1825 map and 1909 plat, and given that Samuel Hanahan still owned a great deal of local property at this point, it may be possible that the land was transferred directly from him to John Rivers.

Table 4.1: History of Land Transfer of Property Associated with the Ferguson Road Tract

Date of Transfer	From	To	Acreage	Documents
1839	John Rivers	Solomon Legare	432	1839 deed of sale
unknown	Solomon Legare	Charles Seele	41	1874 deed of sale
1874	Charles Seele	Samuel Ferguson	15	1874 deed of sale

¹³ Interesting side note, the witnesses who signed on this deed were J.B. Hinson and Wm. S. Godber, William Hinson’s (current property owners’ great-grand father) father and namesake.

1889	Samuel Ferguson	Julia Ferguson	5	1889 will
1889	Ferguson children	Julia Ferguson	6	1889 will
1905	Willie Brown	Julia Ferguson	10	1905 deed of sale

When investigating the historical occupation and ownership of properties, we must remember that often the people who resided at site are not represented in the manuscripts; in such cases we can hope to find evidence in other papers such as letters, diaries, financial accounts, etc (Wilkie 2006). In addition to land plats and deeds, I looked to other historical documents to gain information concerning the human actors associated with the Ferguson Road Tract property. Julia Ferguson, paternal great-grandmother to the current occupants of the property, is listed on a 1900 census as the head of the household (see figure 4.3), living with her three sons, Stephen Brown, Gillie Brown, and Arthur Brown (b. 1884), and her two daughters, Ella Brown and Rosa Brown. Interestingly, none of her children take the family name Ferguson, indicating that they were all already born at the time Julia remarried Samuel Ferguson¹⁴. Indeed, the death certificate of Julia's son Arthur Brown (b. 1884) lists a William Brown as his father (figure 4.4). This story is also contested, however, through a variety of oral accounts, which claim that Arthur's (and Rosa's) biological father was William Godber Hinson, a white plantation owner and confederate soldier (discussed in more detail in the oral history collection included in Chapter 6). Additionally, there is a death certificate for William Brown on James Island, with a death date of 1880, the only death certificate for any William Brown in the area.

¹⁴ Frazier (2006: 61) suggests that Julia Ferguson married a Clarence Ferguson, and the children are a result of this marriage. He provides no citation, however, documentary or oral, and at this point no other evidence of Clarence Ferguson has been found.

T-254

TWELFTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES.

6667 A 87

State South Carolina County Charleston

SCHEDULE No. 1.—POPULATION.

Supervisor's District No. 21 Sheet No. 9

Enumeration District No. 121

Township or other division of county James Island Township (Part of) Name of Institution _____

Name of incorporated city, town, or village, within the above-named division, James Island Township (Part of) Ward of city, _____

Enumerated by me on the 20 day of June, 1900, Residual Census Enumerator.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20		21		22		23		24	25	
																			20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27			
1		James	James	1840	Male	Head					South Carolina																		
2		James	James	1840	Male	Head					South Carolina																		
3		James	James	1840	Male	Head					South Carolina																		
4		James	James	1840	Male	Head					South Carolina																		
5		James	James	1840	Male	Head					South Carolina																		
6		James	James	1840	Male	Head					South Carolina																		
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47		James	James	1840	Male	Head					South Carolina																		
48		James	James	1840	Male	Head					South Carolina																		
49		James	James	1840	Male	Head					South Carolina																		
50		James	James	1840	Male	Head					South Carolina																		

Figure 4.3: 1900 Census, showing the occupation of Julia Ferguson and children. Listed as Julia Ferguson, head; Stephen Brown, son; Gillie Brown, son; Arthur Brown, son; Ella Brown, daughter; Rose Brown, daughter.

U. S. Dept. of Commerce
Bureau of the Census

Standard Certificate of Death
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
Bureau of Vital Statistics
State Board of Health

13451 State Registrar Only

1. PLACE OF BIRTH
County of Kershaw
Township of Bluffwood
City of State Park
Home Address Charleston Co. S.C.
Registration District No. 2800 Registered No. 412
No. S.C. State Hospital
(If death occurred in a hospital or other institution, give name of same, street and number)
Residence— 3 Yrs 4 Mos 22 Days
In City 3 Yrs 4 Mos 22 Days

2. FULL NAME Arthur Brown

PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS

3. SEX Male 4. COLOR OR RACE Col. 5. Single, Married, Widowed, or Divorced (write the word) Married

6a. If married, widowed, or divorced, HUSBAND of (or) WIFE of _____

6. DATE OF BIRTH (Month, day, and year) 1884

7. AGE Years _____ Months _____ Days _____ If, less than 1 day, _____ hrs. _____ min.

8. Trade, profession, or particular kind of work done, as spinner, sawyer, bookkeeper, etc. not stated

9. Industry or business in which work was done, as silk mill, saw mill, bank, etc. _____

10. Date deceased last worked at this occupation (month and year) _____ 11. Total time (years) spent in this occupation _____

12. BIRTHPLACE (city or town) _____ (State or Country) _____

MOTHER FATHER

13. NAME William Brown

14. BIRTHPLACE (city or town) _____ (State or Country) _____

15. MAIDEN NAME Julia Ferguson

16. BIRTHPLACE (city or town) _____ (State or Country) _____

17. INFORMANT S.C. State Hospital, Kershaw Co. (Address) _____

18. BURIAL, CREMATION, OR REMOVAL Place Charleston S.C. Date Nov 2, 1944

19. UNDERTAKER Fredling Funeral Home (Address) 122 Lagoon at Charleston

20. FILED NOV 5 - 1944 W. M. L.

MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

21. DATE OF DEATH (month, day, and year) Nov 2, 1944

22. I HEREBY CERTIFY, that I know deceased from _____ to _____
I last saw him alive on Nov 1, 1944 Death is said to have occurred on the date stated above, at _____
The principal cause of death and related causes of importance in order of importance were as follows:
Syphilis mening. Encephalitis Date of onset _____

Was this death due to pregnancy or to childbirth? If so, state which _____

Contributory causes of importance not related to principal cause _____

Name of operation _____ Date of _____

What test contraindicated _____

23. If death was due to external causes (violence) fill in also the following: Accident, suicide, or homicide? _____ Date of injury _____
Where did injury occur? _____ (Specify city or town, and state)
Specify whether injury occurred in industry, in home, or in public place _____

Manner of injury _____
Nature of injury _____

24. Was disease or injury in any way related to occupation of deceased? _____
If so, specify _____
(Signed) W. M. L. (Address) State Hospital, Columbia S.C.

N. B.—WRITE PLAINLY, WITH UNFADING INK.—THIS IS A PERMANENT RECORD. Every item of information should be carefully supplied. AGE should be stated EXACTLY. PHYSICIANS should state CAUSE OF DEATH in plain terms, so that it may be properly classified. Exact statement of OCCUPATION is very important. See instructions on back of certificate.

MARGIN FOR BINDING

Figure 4.4: Arthur Brown Death Certificate, accessed from Ancestry.com. *South Carolina, Death Records, 1821-1955* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2008. Lists father William Brown and Mother Julia Ferguson.

This places William's death four years before the birth of Arthur and five years before the birth of Rosa, suggesting that Julia's two youngest children were not fathered by either William Brown or Samuel Ferguson, potentially confirming the oral account. This potential discrepancy in the documented account draws our attention to the political influence inherent in the creation of such documents. In an interview with an early twentieth century James Island resident, it becomes apparent that Arthur himself believed Hinson to be his father, and described that it was from Hinson that he "got his start in life" (Frazier 2006: 60). Given that he "knew" William Brown was not his father, the

fact that William's name appears on his death certificate attaches meaning to that line on the document. This observation contributes to the apparent "...consensus. . . among archaeologists, philologists, anthropologists, historians, and sociologists that texts (like other objects) were an active force in the historical process" (Moreland 2006: 142).

Whether Arthur intentionally maintained a public presence (other than to those in whom he confided his 'secret' parentage) as the son of William Brown, or if the information were given by someone else (intentionally skewed or unintentionally erroneous)¹⁵ the fact remains that the public death certificate serves as a cultural artifact that has a distinct role in the historical process. Arthur's parentage, and perhaps more specifically the power of guarding particular aspects as secret or releasing them for public knowledge, certainly affected the way Arthur constructed his identity.

Further evidence of the complexity of historical documents can be found in analysis of Julia Ferguson's death certificate. This death certificate (filled out by her son, Arthur Brown [b. 1884]) lists Julia's father as Richard Graham, but says that the name of her mother was unknown. This initially seemed surprising, as in cases where only one parent can be identified it is usually the father who is missing. Perhaps this reversal suggests that Julia's mother died during childbirth or early on in her youth, and Julia did not have any memories of the woman to pass on to her children. Or, indicating further

¹⁵ According to the death certificate, the personal information for Arthur was provided by the State Hospital records in Columbia, SC. It is unknown whether Arthur himself or a family member initially gave the information to the hospital. Also of note, however, is that Arthur is reported to have died of Syphilis, and was described by family members as "crazy" before he died (Brown personal communications 2012). Even if Arthur provided information to the hospital directly, intentionality cannot be surmised, due to potential cognitive effects of the disease.

complexities of the documentary record, perhaps the date of birth (1867) listed on her death certificate was incorrect.

CERTIFICATE OF DEATH
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
Bureau of Vital Statistics
State Board of Health

1. PLACE OF DEATH
County of Charleston
Township of " "
or
Inc. Town of " "
or
City of Charleston

2. FULL NAME Julia Ferguson

3. SEX F 4. COLOR OR RACE C 5. SINGLE MARRIED WIDOWED OR DIVORCED
(Write the word)

6. DATE OF BIRTH 1867
(Month) (Day) (Year)

7. AGE 60 yrs. mos. days

8. OCCUPATION
(a) Trade, profession, or particular kind of work
(b) General nature of business, or establishment in which employed (or employer)
Domestic

9. BIRTHPLACE (State or Country) James Island

10. NAME OF FATHER Richard Graham

11. BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER (State or Country) S.C.

12. MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER D.K.

13. BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER (State or Country) D.K.

14. I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I attended deceased from May 3, 1927, that I last saw him/her on May 3, 1927, and that death occurred, on the date stated above, at 6:30 p.m. The CAUSE OF DEATH* was as follows:
Starve

15. PLACE OF BURIAL OR REMOVAL James Island DATE OF BURIAL May 6 - 1927

16. UNDERTAKER Julius Widning ADDRESS Charleston S.C.

17. I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I attended deceased from May 3, 1927, that I last saw him/her on May 3, 1927, and that death occurred, on the date stated above, at 6:30 p.m. The CAUSE OF DEATH* was as follows:
Starve

18. Where was disease contracted, if not at place of death?
Did operation precede death? Date of

19. Was there an autopsy?

20. What test confirmed diagnosis?
(Signed) M.D.
(Address)

21. Report the Disease causing Death, or, in deaths from Violent Causes, give (1) Means of Injury; and (2) whether Accidental, Suicidal or Homicidal

22. Place of Burial or Removal James Island DATE OF BURIAL May 6 - 1927

23. UNDERTAKER Julius Widning ADDRESS Charleston S.C.

24. THE ABOVE IS TRUE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE
(Informant) William Brown
(Address) Charleston S.C.

25. FILE NO. 476 1922 J. McGraw, M.D. Local Registrar

26. REGISTRAR (Name and Address)

27. REGISTRAR (Signature)

28. REGISTRAR (Date)

29. REGISTRAR (Address)

30. REGISTRAR (Signature)

31. REGISTRAR (Date)

32. REGISTRAR (Address)

33. REGISTRAR (Signature)

34. REGISTRAR (Date)

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199. REGISTRAR (Date)

200. REGISTRAR (Address)

Fig. 4.5 Julia Ferguson Death Certificate, accessed from Ancestry.com. South Carolina, Death Records, 1821-1955 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2008. The document lists Julia's birthplace as James Island, father as Richard Graham, and mother as unknown (D.K.= Don't Know).

Indeed, on the 1900 census, including information that was, in theory, self-reported, Julia describes that she was born in 1850, and was 50 years old at the time the census was taken. If this is true, then it is highly possible that Julia was born a slave, and perhaps she or her mother were sold or moved shortly after her birth. The possibility of Richard Graham being her father (whether by birth or adoption), however, is perhaps reinforced by an 1880 census record that lists a Stephen Brown, aged 12 years living with Henry and

Rinah Graham and their son Richmond. This matches the age of Julia's son Stephen (born in 1868) as reported on the 1900 census and would suggest that there is some relationship between Henry and Julia, quite possibly that the two are brother and sister, sharing father Richard Graham. Additionally, on the 1900 census, there is a Sue Graham living with Julia Ferguson (no relationship listed), further suggesting a relationship between Julia and the Graham family.

In addition to providing information concerning past events, historical documents can also provide us with insight into the mindset of the author who created the document. Indeed, "Even within one society, the artifacts and written records were used and produced by different people, for different purposes, and at different times and survived for different reasons" (Leone 1988: 33, as cited in Houston 2004). As a specific example, a 1930 map (see Bonstelle and Buxton 2008: 54) of plantation and property borders of James Island labels land parcels with the names of their owners; the Brown family property, with ownership well-established at that time, is simply labeled "Negroes". Despite the easily accessible owner information, the Browns (as well as other African American James Island property owners) were denied equal status with white owners on this map, thereby denying them equal status in history. It is quite likely that the Browns, and other African American families in the area, were not consulted during the making of this map, therefore rendering the populations evidenced through the artifact record of those areas very different from those represented in the documentary record. This map is another example of the role of politics in documentation, and must be taken into account when considering all sources of data. Such duplicity of reality and representation as evidenced in documentation throughout this chapter, is equally as

important to consider as the background information that the documents provide when interpreting the archaeological and oral evidence that will be discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter 5

Results and Analysis of Excavation and Artifact Assemblage

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, historical documentary accounts alone cannot tell the story the occupants of a place, and this is certainly true of the Ferguson Road Tract. Not only have there been difficulties in determining ownership of the property prior to the middle of the nineteenth century, but those individuals who are represented as owners in the texts are not necessarily the occupants of the space (Wilkie 2006). Indeed, in the area surrounding the Ferguson Road tract (and effectively all of James Island) during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries land was owned by a small number of white plantation owners, but was farmed and occupied by enslaved Africans and African Americans (Frazier 2006). Conducting archaeological investigations may be, perhaps, the only way we can directly connect to the property's historical residents.

To reiterate from the introduction, in 2006 the cultural resource management firm TRC began Phase II investigations at sites 38CH2105 and 38CH2106 to determine whether construction of a housing complex at the property would negatively affect any existing cultural resources. After conducting their initial testing, TRC recommended to the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office that site 38CH2105 should be considered eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. This initial testing included engaging in nearly two weeks of archaeological investigations

(including 374 shovel test pits¹⁶ and four 1x1 meter excavation units). This recommendation also included the mandate that every effort possible be made to avoid damaging the site (however 38CH2106 was not recommended by the firm to be considered for nomination). (Grunden 2006).

As it was later deemed not possible to avoid site 38CH2105 as construction of the housing complex went forward, TRC returned in 2007 to conduct a full-scale excavation of the project area. This excavation focused on the area on the east side of Ferguson Road that was considered eligible for recommendation to the National Register of Historic Places. A total of 17 1x1 meter units were excavated down to a sterile soil, in 10 cm arbitrary levels within natural strata, and all soil (excepting from features) was screened through ¼ inch wire mesh screen to ensure uniform artifact sampling and collection. All excavated features were screened through 1/4 inch 1/8 inch screen, and when possible a 5 liter sample of soil was collected for flotation sampling. (Grunden 2011).

According to their excavation report (Grunden 2011), the first layer (identified as Zone 1) in each of the excavation blocks (North, Middle, and South) consisted of fairly similar soils that terminated on top of the cultural layers in which features were identified. This zone continued to a depth of 30-50 cmbs (centimeters below surface) in the North Block, and to 40-50 cmbs in the Middle and South Blocks. The existence and fairly uniform depth of Zone 1 complements the 1909 plat identified in Chapter 4 (figure

¹⁶ A shovel test pit (STP) is part of archaeological survey technique employed to identify locations of cultural activity. Small holes, typically 50x50 centimeters or less, are dug along a grid at set intervals. Artifacts and features located in these STPs are collected and tallied, thus indicating the areas of highest density of cultural material evidence. For this project, TRC excavated their STPs along 5 meter intervals.

4.1). According to the survey of Julia Ferguson's property, in 1909 (and for an unknown period of time before and after) the majority of the 20 acre tract was "planted in cotton and corn". As the average dates of the artifacts collected (see discussion below) suggest they come from an occupation earlier than the twentieth century, it is quite possible that the structure depicted on the 1909 plat does not overlap with the project area, and that it could indeed have been planted in cotton between the time of last occupation and the excavation. In a report that addresses the resources and populations of South Carolina by region, the State Department of Agriculture (1883) describes the process of cotton production that has been tailored and adapted to the coastal region:

The remarkably high beds on which cotton is planted here, being from eighteen inches to two feet high, subserves this purpose [of assisting with drainage]. The best planters have long had open drains through their fields. These were generally made by running two furrows with a plow, and afterwards hauling out the loose dirt with a hoe, thus leaving an open ditch, if it may be so termed, a foot or more in depth. In recent years the enterprising farmers on James' Island have made deeper ditches and placed plank drains in them [South Carolina State Board of Agriculture 1883: 33].

These beds, ranging in depth from 18 to 24 inches (45.72 to 60.96cm), would certainly help account for the 50cm depth of soil on top of culturally definable features (which TRC stripped mechanically prior to their excavation).

As a component of the CRM project, TRC had already completed the majority of the artifact analysis when I began my research for this project. They cleaned and catalogued all artifacts, processed flotation samples, including conducting additional

botanical analysis, and separated out faunal material for further analysis (an initial analysis of the faunal remains recovered is currently being conducted as part of an Undergraduate Senior Thesis by Lauryn Lehman at the University of South Carolina). This enabled me to focus on the intricacies of individual artifacts, and look for links to the documentary and oral records.

Initially, after completing the Phase II survey in 2006, a Mean Ceramic Date (MCD) of 1769 for the entire site east of Ferguson Road was obtained by comparing the average of the median dates of production of all identifiable European-manufactured historic ceramics¹⁷ (n=956) recovered from shovel test pits (Grunden 2006). A similar date of 1766 is obtained through the comparison of European ceramics (n=1639) from all contexts of site 38CH2105 after the Phase III excavation as well. Interestingly, however, when the ceramics (n=147) recovered from pit features are separated and dated on their own, they return a MCD of 1714, with those ceramics (n=1466) remaining from the rest of the site now yielding an MCD of 1806 (Grunden 2011). This suggests the potential of multiple, isolated occupations over time, or at least an expansion of the occupied space, in which the earlier pit features were not in use during the later occupation. This also fits with the initial observations of artifact density and distribution from the Phase II testing. When the frequencies of pearlware and creamware, which were produced from the mid-late eighteenth century throughout the mid-nineteenth century (Miller 2000), are compared to the earlier ceramics whose production did not continue into the nineteenth century it becomes clear that the former are present in much higher proportions in the

¹⁷ The collection of European ceramics recovered from the site included Astbury, Border Ware, Buckley, Creamware, Delftware, Faience, Jackfield, Manganese Mottled, Pearlware, Porcelain, Redware, Staffordshire Slipware, Whiteware, Yellowware, and various Stonewares.

southern portion of the project area than the latter, suggesting an expansion of the occupation into the southern area of the site over time (Grunden 2006). Concerning additional analysis attempts, the fragmentary nature of the total assemblage of ceramic sherds contributed to the seemingly homogeneous nature of the collection. With nearly 4,000 sherds in the collection, many of which were smaller than 1 cm, determining an MNV (minimum number of vessels) would have consumed incredible time and resources, if even possible at all.

The distribution of features throughout the site confirms a similar temporal pattern of an earlier occupation in the north and east portions of the site, with a later occupation expanding into the southern and western portions of the project areas. Of the 48 features identified in the initial excavation, 30 were determined to be culturally relevant. After excavation of those features, 13 of the 30 were identified as pit features, none of which date to later than the mid-eighteenth century (according to MCDs) and all are located in the north and middle portions of the project area. Three features were identified as firebox/ hearth remains, located in the middle section of the project area. These fireplace features were identified as post-dating the nearby pit features (as no architectural artifacts were located in the pit fill) and likely associated with a late-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century occupation. They all contained brick and friable mortar rubble, but no complete in-situ brick or other architectural components remained. Finally, the southern portion of the excavation, consisting of four contiguous 1x1 meter units contained the highest density of nineteenth century artifacts, further suggesting a later occupation in the southern portion of the site. Unfortunately, excepting the few refuse pit features and hearth remains, the majority of artifacts collected throughout the

excavation are not associated with particular features, or any noticeable dispersal pattern, and at this point particular activity areas cannot be identified. One notable exception, however, is an articulated brick feature that was uncovered in the North Block of the project excavation. The feature consisted of two courses of handmade brick, measuring 34cm north-south and 70cm east-west, and was likely a building pier, confirming the existence of a structure at this location. However, no other associated piers or structural features were found. (Grunden 2006, 2011)

Although I am not focusing on the older Native American habitation, evidence of continual reuse of this property should remind us of the importance of the various viewpoints of the local landscape, and the effect that may have on cultural adaptations of groups in the area. Among the artifact assemblage are a great deal of ceramics, including European, Native American, and Colonoware. While the Native American and Colonoware sherds are not as easily dateable as their European counterparts (although Kloss et al. (2003) argue that Colonoware was produced well into the nineteenth century), they do contribute evidence of multicultural interactions of various actors at the project location. Indeed as noted by Steen and Barnes (2010) Colonoware, produced by Africans, African Americans, and Native Americans, as well as their descendants, is an important area of focus in analyzing a potential Gullah habitation. Colonoware represents one of the few goods recovered archaeologically that were made by enslaved Africans and African Americans and used themselves (Samford 1996). These wares highlight particular African American traditions while still emphasizing aspects of intercultural relations, through the sharing of production ideas and techniques. The co-presence of the three different types of ceramics in several features indicates the potential

presence of Europeans, Native Americans, and African Americans [possibly Gullah] simultaneously at one locale, or at least the presence of representations of each group. In any event, the assemblage indicates an undeniable exchange of goods and ideas between groups that would certainly contribute to perceptions of self and group identity.

According to Stanley South (1977) artifacts can be sorted into functional groups, and then statistically compared based on frequency of artifact in each group type to determine the socioeconomic status of the occupation in question. The artifacts from the Ferguson Road Tract were sorted by TRC according to functional group and compared to a pattern series that had been updated since South's original distinctions to include the Carolina Slave Pattern¹⁸ (Garrow 1982; Grunden 2011; Wheaton et al. 1983). While not the end-all definitive classification for the collection, this patterning technique does provide a basic comparison to begin thinking about the entirety of an assemblage. As seen in table 3.1 (recreated from Grunden 2011) the artifact pattern of the Ferguson Road tract aligns nearly perfectly with the predictive template for a comparable Carolina Slave site.

¹⁸ For the purpose of this thesis, I reference the Carolina Slave Pattern, as it was used by TRC in their analysis of the artifact assemblage. I do note, however, that there exists some dispute over the validity of the pattern considering cross-plantation variation (for examples see Moore 1985, Samford 1996, Singleton 1980). My intention here is not to further essentialize the African American population representing the Ferguson Road occupation, but rather simply identify the low-income status suggested by the artifact assemblage.

Table 5.1: Percentages of artifacts by group of the Ferguson Road Tract collection

Artifact Group	38CH2105	Revised Carolina	Revised Frontier	Carolina Slave
Kitchen	72.5	59.5	40.7	77.4
Architecture	18.1	27.6	42.4	17.8
Clothing	0.45	3	0.9	0.5
Personal	0.04	0.3	0.1	0.1
Tobacco	6.8	7.8	7.9	3.5
Furniture	0.24	0.4	0.6	0.1
Activities	1.7	1.3	2.4	0.5
Other	0.17	0.01	5	0.01
Total	100	100	100	100

This again correlates with both documentary and oral sources. During the time of occupation associated with the excavation, documentary sources (plats, journals, etc. discussed in Chapters 2 and 4) indicate that the majority of the population of James Island was comprised of enslaved Africans and African Americans. Of the small percentage of non-African/African Americans who inhabited the Island, nearly all occupied well-documented plantations. While a bit more of a stretch, this pattern also confirms Arthur Brown's (b. 1946) opinion that "we've always been here" (discussed in Chapter 6, referring to his family's occupation of the property). While current research can neither confirm nor deny that the Brown family specifically is tied to the eighteenth and early nineteenth century occupation of the property (although they are definitively

members of a descendant community of the property), the artifact assemblage, through this comparative patterning, does agree that the land has, for nearly all of “American” history, been occupied by enslaved Africans and their descendants. The Carolina Slave pattern on a more general level can also attest to an occupation of a lower economic status, even if not definitively an enslaved occupation. Used as a wealth indicator, this information still agrees with documentary and oral accounts, which indicate that even the few freed African American occupants of the area had very little wealth, and a fairly low economic status. This view also takes into account concerns noted by several archaeologists of the limitations such artifact pattern analysis can impose on its subjects (Armstrong 2003; Orser 1988). By considering this method of pattern analysis on its surface level, the greater complexity inherent in the Caste system of the southern plantations is ignored. Although this information is very difficult to acquire in the plantation setting, it is nonetheless important to address in theoretical considerations of the economic divisions both within and between various plantations (Orser 1988).

Finally, while being careful not to attribute too much weight to any individual artifact, I did come across several items that, whether in actuality or metaphorically, can bring together the material, documentary, and oral records in telling the story of the Ferguson Road Tract property. Figure 5.1 below depicts a unique, extremely detailed, molded pipe stem that comes from the Ferguson Road artifact assemblage. This pipe stem has a bore diameter of 4/64”, suggesting a relatively recent (in relation to ceramic pipe production) manufacture date.¹⁹ It is decorated with an inverted square and

¹⁹ According to Harrington (1956) pipe stem bore diameters become smaller over time. Although he predicts a diameter of 4/64” indicates a manufacture date of 1750-1800,

compass, with a star in the center, and includes the letters I and G. At this point, no published documentation, academic or otherwise, identifies this combined iconography. According to a member of a local Masonic Lodge, the iconography of this pipe stem suggests it was likely carried by a Confederate soldier during the Civil War (Jeffrey Hall, Personal communication 2012). Now jumping from the story of the materiality to that of the oral history, we have the Brown family who, through oral history, believe they are genealogically connected to a Confederate soldier, William Hinson, through their great-grandmother Julia Ferguson, who at one time owned the property where the pipe stem was recovered.

Shifting gears to the documentary story, William Hinson thought of himself as a Historian, and kept and collected meticulous written accounts throughout his life. He was a very renowned Confederate officer; many researchers cite his journals from the Civil war for their commentary on maneuvers and organization. Before and after the war, he was well known on James Island for his involvement in community organizations and pioneering work in techniques for planting and harvesting cotton. While his father Joseph Hinson owned 53 slaves according to an 1850 census, William owned none. Interestingly, according to several newspaper articles and letters found among his collection of papers, William Hinson often sided with African Americans in social disputes, and was sometimes contacted by local African American communities as an advisor. Also included in the collection of papers William Hinson donated to the Charleston Library Society is a 45 page handwritten history of Freemasonry in South

however this method does not work into the nineteenth century, as bore diameters are standardized, and manufacture continues after 1800 (Grunden 2011).

Carolina²⁰. By viewing the artifact through the various lenses, we have formed a triangle in which William Hinson, the pipe stem, and the site (and by association the history of the Brown family) could be tied to each other. While this juxtaposition of stories serves as just one possible vignette, it demonstrates the added value that the documentary, material, and oral records each provide in a holistic interpretation.



Figure 5.1: Pipe stem fragment with Freemason decoration, recovered from plow zone.

Also of interest, there were three iron hooks among the assemblage (not associated with any excavated features) that were of a size and form that would make them convenient for fishing. Currently, the site is within walking distance, approximately 1.5km of the nearest “fishable” waterway (an inlet off the Stono River) and 1.75km from the Stono River itself, certainly within walking distance. When these fishing hooks are interpreted in conjunction with the oral account of Arthur Brown (b. 1946) however, a more nuanced picture emerges. He recalls substantially higher water levels during his youth, and recounts seeing a dock that had been constructed in the marsh across Camp Road from the property (just over 100m). He explains how “folks

²⁰ It is not currently known whether William Hinson was a member of a Freemason Lodge, but seems highly likely, as he had possession of documentation that contained the “secret” knowledge of the Masons.

would go out there all the time to fish”, both off the dock and in small canoes that could be paddled over to the deeper waters of the Stono (Arthur Brown personal communication), demonstrating the ease of access and connection to the water for residents of the site. While waterways in the remote islands often contributed to isolation it is also observed that, “[. . .] the creeks and rivers that supposedly cut off the islands from each other and from the larger world are the very ‘roads’ that once facilitated the traffic of huge crops of rice, indigo, and long staple cotton from outlying plantations to port cities and markets across the sea” (Matory 2008: 233). For isolated groups of Gullah populations especially, Matory (2008) observes, marshes, rivers, and streams provided a means of mobility; if the immediate access to water could transport plantation crops, it could certainly transport people as well, and with them their ideas and culture.

So who lived at the Ferguson Road Tract site in historical times? Could the archaeology of the Ferguson Road Tract be the archaeology of a Gullah habitation? Recalling the evolution of Gullah culture as a shared response to the stressors of slavery by a group of forced-migrated Africans and their descendants under the rule of the Task system (Barnes and Steen 2012a, 2012b; Crook 2001; Goodwine 1998; Jarett and Lucas 2002), I believe it certainly can be seen at the Ferguson Tract Road. The remoteness of the site has allowed for the development and maintenance of unique cultural behaviors outside the direct gaze of an overseer, while the proximity to the aquatic “roads” permitted mobility and interaction with others. The artifact record demonstrates a low-income population, which in conjunction with the documentary record (which indicates that all, or nearly all, white families were of high economic status, as noted in chapter 4) suggests a group of enslaved or freed Africans and African Americans. The *lack* of

architectural remains (similar to the single pier of brick construction) indicates a group response to the environment of reusing the limited resources available. Multicultural interactions evidenced by the presence of European, Native American, and Colonoware ceramics demonstrate collaboration within and between groups through trade and shared technologies. By considering these lived aspects of the residents of the Ferguson Road Tract site through the lens of a potential Gullah occupation, we can return the individuality and active agency that would be lost by considering the same collection as simply representing an enslaved African community.

Chapter 6

Results and Analysis of Oral Accounts

In order to explore notions of Gullah identity and how they might relate to the archaeological deposits and written records previously presented relating to the Ferguson Road Tract, I intended to seek out emic views of the land by gaining access to associated oral historical accounts. I interviewed Millicent Brown (b. 1948), Arthur Brown (b. 1946), and Minerva King (b. 1944), all members of the Brown family who have lived on, or currently live on, the property that is part of what is identified as the Ferguson Road Tract. Initially I hoped to interview self-identifying members of the Gullah community, in order to attempt to identify archaeological patterns of Gullah cultural identity through a discussion of material culture. I had substantial difficulties in finding Gullah individuals who would both agree to meet with me for an interview, and then follow through with the interview. I was able to schedule and conduct an interview with self-identifying Gullah artist Sabree, which I had hoped would provide me with an outside perspective on Gullah cultural identity to compare with themes obtained from interviews of the Brown family members. To help compensate for the dearth of interviews collected, I consulted notes and transcripts from forums and focal groups of self-identified Gullah communities led by the National Park Service as well as historical and contemporary interviews with James Island residents conducted and collected from 1942-

2005 by Eugene Frazier (see Frazier 2006, 2010)²¹. During the interviews I conducted, I asked open-ended questions and did not confront the interviewee(s) if they provided what I thought to be conflicting data in an attempt to elicit successful results and minimize unintentional constriction of responses (see Ritchie 2003)²². In the interview with Arthur Brown (b. 1946), both the interviewee and myself brought documentary material that was consulted to stimulate more detailed discussion concerning specifics of the property.

Among my initial research questions was to investigate the possibility that Gullah individuals were present at the site during the historical occupation of the Ferguson Road Tract. In an interview on July 12, 2012 with Arthur Brown (b. 1946), a member of the Brown family who had spent a portion of his childhood near the project location in the 1940s and 1950s, I attempted to find out whether local Gullah populations existed at that time on the island. After being asked whether he himself spoke Gullah as a child on the island Arthur (b. 1946) responded, “I don’t think so. But maybe I did. I went to New York and I had to learn a little differently.” He continues on to note that “in my travel from South to North my language was far different, and they all said, oh, you must be Geechee or something.” (Throughout the course of the interview, Arthur seemingly used the terms Gullah and Geechee interchangeably). In this interview, the only references to a Gullah/Geechee identity that Arthur (b. 1946) mentions are all externally-imposed, rather than personally claimed. While it is certainly possible that Arthur simply had a strong regional accent and difficulty understanding and being understood by others outside of his home environment, the evidence could be telling an

²¹ Although Frazier did not specifically search out members of the Gullah community, many self-identified as such throughout the course of the interview.

²² After completion of the interviews, however, I verified data provided to the extent possible, and annotated the transcripts wherever conflicts or discrepancies arose.

alternative story that Arthur and the other James Island Browns were speaking Gullah. A similar observation is made by Donny James in an on-line forum discussing Gullah culture in Charleston/the Lowcountry:

It wasn't until I got older and went to college that I was able to put a term with an understanding and definition to this difference. We just knew we were from Charleston and it was different [...] *Far as I knew I spoke regular English like everybody else. I wasn't aware of the difference til college* [emphasis added] [James 2007].

In these observations, James is referring to the fact that he spoke Gullah growing up, but did not identify as Gullah or realize that he was part of a unique cultural group until he was surrounded by and compared to outsiders. Other participants on the blog echo James' reflections in various comments and threads, confirming similar experiences (see James 2007). Prior to the establishment of the Gullah/ Geechee Heritage Corridor, the National Park Service conducted a series of focus group meetings among African American and Gullah communities. At two of the meetings, one in Jacksonville, Florida, and one in Little River, South Carolina, some participants observed that they had initially attended the meeting out of curiosity, not identifying as Gullah/ Geechee. During and after the meetings, some of these individuals thanked NPS team members for "telling me who I am", indicating that they had perhaps at least begun to consider the possibility of belonging to a Gullah cultural identity (NPS 2005).

These interactions documented by Arthur Brown (b. 1946), Donny James and others posted on his blog, and the National Park Service, reaffirm Moser et al.'s (2002) suggestion that oral histories and collaboration with the public has the great potential for

altering and reforming our initial research questions. In the case of researching the history of Lowcountry African American identity, for instance, Arthur's (b. 1946) observations indicate that perhaps the modern conception of what constitutes Gullah culture is just that: modern. Rather than simply asking if he spoke Gullah, perhaps if I had asked Arthur (b. 1946) to recreate a sample conversation he may have had with a friend during childhood, I may have gotten a different answer. Is it possible, for instance, that Arthur (b. 1946) may have been raised in a household that could, to an outsider, be considered culturally Gullah, but simply does not self-identify that way? This may then alter my research questions to look at how the modern concept of what constitutes a Gullah culture developed, and how that identity began to emerge and become claimed by the people who currently choose to identify as belonging to the group.

This brings us back to the notions proposed by Barnes and Steen (2012a) of the shifting patterns of claiming identity among Gullah communities and populations throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In conjunction with white supremacist violence and Jim Crow racism, African Americans were forcibly assimilated (although surely while remaining socially segregated) into "mainstream" behaviors. With the desegregation of schools, for instance, localized dialects were prohibited in favor of a universal "standard English" that was the only permitted language in the classroom (Barnes and Steen 2012a; Brown Personal Communication; Campbell 2010). It is certainly possible, therefore, that a denial of the existence of Gullah identity arose as a strategy of resistance among African Americans of the Lowcountry in an effort to minimize persecution. Social erasure of the label, however, as we have seen in the discussion above, does not hide the existence of the unique cultural distinctions.

Following Heider's (1988) notions that the most interesting subjects can arise from points of contention in the data, we see that this discrepancy pointed out by ethnography is clearly an intriguing point of discussion. Perhaps in the mid-twentieth century Gullah identity was not internally claimed, but rather ascribed by outside observers. The comments from Arthur caused me to pause and consider the format of my question. Asking things such as, "do you identify as Gullah" is perhaps an overly-directed leading question that assumes we share the same previously established definition of the cultural group. Indeed, an understanding of social identity can often be generated by such differences between the emic and etic perceptions of a group (Barnes 2011, Voss 2005). If I should engage in future investigations attempting to locate Gullah culture I would likely benefit from using more open-ended questions such as: Are there any repetitive phrases or sayings you remember from your childhood? What types of foods did you eat while you were on James Island? Do you remember playing any specific games as a child on James Island? Rather than asking Arthur to make a distinct comparison and forcing him to make an "either or" choice, giving him the opportunity to establish his identity on his own terms would likely yield a dramatically more comprehensive result. This highlights the challenges inherent in trying to obtain any information regarding cultural identity, regardless of the data source.

I also discussed issues of landscape recollection and interpretation with Arthur (b. 1946) in this interview. When asked if he knew how Julia Ferguson acquired the land that was to become their family territory, Arthur (b. 1946) expressed very nostalgic notions implying a permanent connection to the land. He explains, "Well [. . .] I think that we come [. . .] from a descendant from the pilgrims, and she was one of those, either

a daughter of them or less [. . .] that's where she got it [the land] from during that period of time. I don't think there's any records showing prior to. Uh, this is 19..." This seems to reflect the ideas of the Gullah term *binyah*, a term that refers to an individual who has *always* been in a certain place (Bin Yah 2008), although Arthur (b. 1946) himself made no reference or felt no connection to the Gullah implications of this idea. However, there is currently no evidence that any connection existed between the Brown Family and descendants of the Pilgrims. Additionally, later on in the interview, as we looked over historical documentary records, Arthur (b. 1946) pulled from his own collection the copy of a deed of sale showing Julia Ferguson purchasing the land from another person in the late nineteenth century, indicating at least a more recent date that his family acquired ownership of the property.

From a methodological standpoint, the interview I conducted with Arthur (b. 1946) was both informative and slightly limiting. Arthur Brown (b. 1946) is the cousin of Millicent Brown, who introduced Arthur (b. 1946) and myself the day of the interview. Whether intending to be polite or helpful, Millicent remained for the duration of my interview with Arthur (b. 1946), and contributed to the discussion throughout. At certain points in the interview Millicent and Arthur (b. 1946) prompted each other's memories of family relations and landscape alterations. On other topics, however, they disagreed and even argued (amicably) over an answer to a particular question. In either case, I quickly learned the difficulties of reviewing, transcribing, and editing interviews that include multiple correspondents.

During a private interview with Millicent, I inquired about the relationships of Julia Ferguson to the Brown Family and to William Hinson. When I asked Millicent about what she terms the “family mythology” she revealed the following:

Over the last maybe ten or fifteen years my sister Minerva, who has lived on James Island consistently, I had been gone, finds out that everybody knows that Julia Ferguson was the long-time mate, unmarried, but still mate, companion if you will, of a white man, who we now think is a former [. . .] Confederate officer by the name of Hinson. And a local historian²³, happens to be white, had told my sister that he knew in fact that Hinson was the owner of the property²⁴, and that he had had this relationship with Julia Ferguson, and then we started assuming that that’s how Julia Ferguson got the property. So, as you know, we’re trying to figure out is that true or not. But, we’ve had this understanding that my father, I’m sorry my grandfather Arthur Brown [b. 1884], being the son of Julia Ferguson [. . .] we can tell just by the pictures that he was probably mixed blood.

Several of Millicent’s comments here are mirrored in other oral accounts. In an interview with Eugene Frazier (2006) James W. Scott comments:

²³ Referring to historian Jim Hayes.

²⁴ At this point documentary evidence suggests that Hinson did not at any time own the Ferguson Road Tract property. As he is believed to have had a relationship with Julia Ferguson and her children, and reported to have “given [Arthur his] start in life” (Frazier 2006) it could be speculated that he may have assisted in providing funds for purchasing the land or facilitated political negotiations.

You know J. Arthur Brown²⁵ [b. 1884]. He usta live down there on Camp Road, until he die. J. Arthur look like a white man. His mother used to do domestic work for old man William Hinson, he was the owner of the Hinson Plantation in Fort Johnson section. We was talking one day about the white man having baby with our black women. Arthur [b. 1884] told Harry Urie and me that Hinson was his daddy, and gave him his start in life . . . [60].

If Arthur (b. 1884) had told information concerning his heritage to Harry Urie and James Scott (and both of those individuals freely passed the information on to Eugene Frazier in interviews) it is quite likely that other inhabitants of the island knew as well. We also see here, as Millicent noted, the common practice used by locals to determine an individual's heritage through a phenotypic assessment.

Millicent continues with her interpretation of accounts concerning William Hinson:

And so he is supposedly the child of this white former Confederate officer. And my grandfather was given the bulk of the property, and like I said he was quite generous, and he divided it up to other children of Julia Ferguson²⁶, but these were not his whole brothers and sisters. So again, the idea being that this wealth of land came from this white man through his child with Julia, and as she had

²⁵ I believe James Scott may have been confused, and actually speaking of Arthur Brown. J. Arthur's mother was Millie Ellison, who did not work for the Hinson family. But Arthur's (b. 1884) mother, Julia Ferguson, likely did.

²⁶ Actually, according to property deeds following Julia Ferguson's death, Julia distributed the land among all her children; Arthur (b. 1884) subsequently purchased the land back from his siblings.

other children, he grew up considering them to be his brothers and sisters, and so he made it possible for them to buy some of his property so the just, so again, it's bigger than just a tight nuclear family [. . .] we keep hearing stories that substantiate the fact that there was this long time relationship, whether that's where the land came from or not²⁷, [. . .] stories about how whenever he bought groceries, he was known to have the groceries delivered to Julia Ferguson²⁸, so we feel pretty comfortable that there was in fact some relationship, we just don't quite yet know whether we can document the land [. . .] but we know that not unlike many other communities there is some white man who has an alliance with a black woman and takes care of her and her children. [. . .] We heard it from Jim Hayes the historian, and then when we start asking we find that our country cousins kinda know the stories too [. . .] but they somehow didn't quite get to our table until much later. Now my father, J. Arthur Brown [b. ~1920], he goes off, gets a college education, marries a college educated woman, comes back, has these children, maybe you don't talk about that kinda stuff at the family table. My grandmother knows some of this, she married into the family. She knows about Julia, you know? But like for so many generations, that's not the kinda stuff you talk about [. . .] So as much of this, it may be lore, but we're still trying

²⁷ Recent research conducted for this project suggests, as discussed above, that indeed the land itself does not come directly from Hinson. This does not deny the possibility, however, that he may have provided the funds to purchase it or arranged a deal; perhaps this was what Arthur Brown (b. 1884) meant when he told James Scott that Hinson "gave him his start in life"

²⁸ According to Millicent and Minerva there are copies of a receipt showing groceries purchased by William Hinson delivered to the property of Julia Ferguson; however I have been unable to locate those receipts at this time.

to gather as much of it as possible, but we found out that people knew stuff that we did not know.

Millicent notes the difficulties of dealing with taboo subjects, and observes the effect they can have on access to knowledge, even pertaining to one's own family.²⁹

In an effort to develop material culture correlates for what could be expected for a Gullah habitation, I interviewed Sabree, a self-identifying Gullah artist who grew up in Lake City, SC. Although the interview did not prove fruitful for establishing any patterns pertaining to material remains, several other themes emerged from our interview. Sabree touched on the idea of the power of secrecy in a landscape, noting, "I mean, crimes are committed that are, that you would never hear or know about, unfortunately. But most of the time it wasn't like that. *But every now and then there was a secret, a secret like that* [emphasis added]". Sabree was referring here to the "secret" crimes committed by a serial killer near her home, but abstracted the notions of the protection of such secrets made possible by the remoteness of the landscape. Gullah culture, or Lowcountry African American culture, developed during times of slavery in rural areas that allowed protection from the white overseer's gaze, permitting transmission of cultural practices among groups. Interestingly, Sabree identifies the same protective

²⁹ I found myself in a similar situation while conducting research for this project. I had been given the name, from Millicent, of the historian who had copies of grocery receipts paid for by William Hinson with Julia Ferguson's address listed as the delivery location (alluding to a relationship between the two). When I met with the historian, and mentioned that I had knowledge of the receipts and the extramarital relationship, I was not given access to either the physical documents or a discussion of them, as it was not so subtly hinted at that the topic was not suitable for discussing with a "young lady".

nature of the landscape, although observing that its hidden nature now provides shelter to secrets of all.

My interview with Sabree became slightly controversial when I broached the topic of cultural identity. After asking Sabree how she defined Gullah identity she responded, “Ok. That’s a excellent question, and I get asked that all the time. Here goes. Ok. [. . .] we brought with us a dialect, the West Indies dialect, our culture our language [. . .] and then we mixed that with this southern flair, and that’s when you get this Gullah”. The introductory lead-up to her response signaled to me that the response I was about to get may be a rehearsed, or standardized, as she did indicate she was asked that question frequently. The definition she provided differs dramatically from those provided by historical and modern literature that suggest the evolution of Gullah culture under the guise of resistance against an overwhelming hegemony (for example see Campbell 2010; Chandler 2008; Frazier 2006; Jackson 2012; Morgan 2010; Pollitzer 1999; Singleton 2010; Steen 2010; Steen and Barnes 2010; etc.).



Figure 6.1: “Soft Landing” by Sabree

Figure 6.1 above is a piece entitled “Soft Landing” created by Sabree, demonstrating the vibrant southern flair she feels inherent in her identity claims. In processing Sabree’s responses, I must consider whether her answers are tailored to present an intentional image that fits nicely with her artist’s reputation. On the other hand, it is important to avoid imprinting expectations of identity upon her; perhaps, for Sabree, her definition may accurately describe what being Gullah means to her.

In speaking with Millicent and other Brown family members, the concept of family emerged as another interesting theme. On more than one occasion, in the middle of a conversation discussing family history, one or both of the informants realized that there was indeed no actual blood connection to the particular individual in question. Such realizations did not seem to surprise the Brown family members; on the contrary, they explained that family, for them, at least throughout their childhood, was an entirely social construct. Indeed, in an interview with Millicent and Minerva together, while

discussing particulars of their family tree, they both realized that an aunt with whom they had spent a great deal of time during childhood could not have been a biological relative. Economic and geographic conditions necessitated the collaboration of local populations on the island. This brings about the question, if family and communities are to be considered a social construct, does that follow for a descendant community as well?

In an interview with Millicent alone, she also discussed the social divisions present among her family members. While reflecting on her childhood summer visits to her family property on James Island she explains, “And it was different. Um, we had relatives that lived um on acreage surrounding ours, so this is when we got to see our country cousins, you know. And they were my grandfather’s [emphasis] people.” Millicent later clarifies that she always respected her “country cousins”, but reemphasized a social separation between the various family groups, paralleling the geographical division of the Island portion of Charleston versus the downtown area. This observation brings to mind the perceptions conveyed by Arthur (b. 1946) and Donny of some unknown, unspoken, and unlabeled cultural boundary that separated the remote island populations (who were considered “country folk”) from their not-so-distant (geographically) city neighbors.

Millicent also makes similar observations to those noted by Sabree, attributing a certain amount of secrecy to the rural landscape, particularly when describing her father’s Civil Rights meetings:

As I got older, I found out my father used to go out there. He used to have card parties. He and my mother played cards, and so he used to probably use the house

as kind of a hang out. I'm sure there's a lot of stuff that went on in that house that we didn't know about, ya know? But my father was also very involved with Civil Rights³⁰ activism, and there were secret meetings and a lot of people will tell you that not only were some of those meetings held, strategy meetings held in our house in the city, but, I think my father also used the summer house [on James Island] as a more reclusive place, and people couldn't watch who was in and out of your house the way they would in town. And so, I found out in later years that, you know, he certainly went out and used the house, whether it was for, entertainment purposes, card parties, or for meetings.

It was the secrecy provided by the rural landscape that gave J. Arthur Brown (b. ~1920) the advantage in keeping his NAACP activities hidden from the white gaze, and perhaps provided him the key to successful organization of events.

Members of the Brown family have been politically active and engaged in Charleston, SC for decades. J. Arthur Brown (1914-1988) was dynamically involved in Civil Rights issues throughout his life, including serving as president of the Charleston branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) from 1953-1960. In 1955, J. Arthur and his family opened a court case, challenging the school district of Charleston to desegregate the public schools of the city, with his daughter Minerva Brown as the main plaintiff. When the case had not been resolved by the time of Minerva's graduation from high school, the case was transferred to be under the name of her sister. Finally, in 1963 the case of Millicent Brown et al. vs. School

³⁰ In addition to his general activist contributions, J. Arthur was president of the Charleston chapter of the NAACP from 1953 to 1960 (Baker 2006).

District 20, Charleston County was won by the Brown family, and Millicent became one of the first of 10 children to begin the integration of Charleston schools (Brown 2004; Millicent Brown personal communications).



Figure 6.2: Millicent Brown as one of the first 10 African American students to attend desegregated Charleston public schools. (Courtesy of the New York Times September 4 1963).

Beyond this iconic court case, the Brown family members were well known for their presence in the politically charged climate of the civil rights movement of the mid-twentieth century. During (and likely before and after) his time as president of the NAACP chapter, J. Arthur Brown used his property on the Ferguson Road Tract, and the secrecy that its seclusion provided (as discussed above), to hold organizational and planning meetings (Millicent Brown personal communications). The entire family was present at the 1963 News and Courier Riots, resulting in the arrests of both Minerva and Millicent Brown for their participation (Brown 2004). Despite the fact that it was only

five miles from their James Island property, both Minerva and Millicent had never set foot on Folly Beach until 1960, when they participated in a protest, as they were not allowed on the “white beach” (Millicent Brown and Minerva King personal communications). And when Millicent returned from college to work as a substitute teacher at James Island High School in 1968, she continued her political activism in the community:

And so I come back as this little hotshot substitute teacher. And I’m encouraging the black kids. You know, ‘yes we’re gonna have a black history program’, and yes and I helped them. I remember I found some pictures for them to hang up, and you know, ‘cause we wanted to just celebrate black history month, and it caused a riot. And I was claimed to be one of the instigators, which was not true. But, you know, the fact that I was an outspoken advocate that these kids had a right to want to make the best of black history month. *So I’m just saying even by ‘68 James Island was still a tough area [emphasis added].*

Her observation of James Island as a “tough area” in 1968 attests to the political climate of the island, providing a valuable oral account to incorporate into a historical analysis of the area.

As Millicent reflects on her childhood and what she remembers of her time on James Island, she highlights the discrimination and Civil Rights struggles felt by her family and the inhabitants of the Island. She remembers extreme poverty, and close to a 100% African American habitation on the land. In conjunction with a Charleston newspaper article from 1871, which describes the island population of the time as “thirty

whites to 600 negroes,” we can imagine the historic circumstances as not altogether dissimilar from those Millicent describes.

Turning onto Camp road, Millicent recalls the pre-development environment, and recounts a walk as a young girl down to the property. She tells me of the ties she feels to the land, and how she feels strong connections to the place and its ancestors. In considering a landscape archaeology approach, we must look to Margaret Rodman’s (1992) discussion of the anthropological views of places as things that are inherently understood without a specific verbal explanation. As demonstrated through the oral accounts of the Brown family members, places are dynamic and socially constructed, not just academic products.

Chapter 7

Discussion and Conclusions

“I know that books seem like the ultimate thing that’s made by one person, but that’s not true. . . Every reading of a book is a collaboration between the reader and the writer who are making the story up together.” (John Green)

So what is the story of the people who have inhabited the Ferguson Road Tract? As I hope I have made clear in the preceding chapters, it is a story with a dynamic and varied past. The land has hosted individuals and groups of varying cultural diversity over time. It has been a space of “secrecy” whose remoteness has repeatedly provided protective cover to allow its inhabitants to resist against local and global hegemonies; first by providing a space for the generation and maintenance of a resistive Gullah culture; again in the nineteenth century allowing for culturally “illicit” relationships; and finally providing a space for organization of African American political resistance through the NAACP in the twentieth century. While such elements of secrecy have been important to the individuals have lived on the property of the Ferguson Road Tract, it is important to maintain a difference between protective secrecy, and allowing such conditions to obscure the occupants’ presence.

The Gullah people are one such group who have been surprisingly invisible in historical and archaeological documentation over time (Barnes and Steen 2012a, 2012b; Steen and Barnes 2010). While we certainly cannot definitively say that the Ferguson

Road Tract was occupied by Gullah individuals, it is clear that considering the possibility of their presence on the land, and a consideration of the archaeological evidence through a Gullah lens can, and should, be done. By employing methods that incorporate the Gullah perspective, a group that has been [re]marginalized throughout history (Barnes and Steen 2012b) can begin to have a representation that had been historically erased. Such a method of interpretation requires the interrogation of a maximum of data sources, which, at the Ferguson Road Tract convey an interesting and diverse picture, which expresses some contradictions on its surface. Such contradictions should not necessarily be seen as detrimental to the story, however, but rather contributing to the dynamic nature of human populations.

In fact to some, it is these negotiations of the contradictions in data where we can see the emergence and inspiration of the questions we should be asking. In what he terms the “Rashomon Effect”, wherein ethnographers provide parallel stories with multiple, contradictory truths, Heider (1988: 74) makes the keen observation that “those realms of culture that generate disagreement are likely to be those that are most problematical and interesting.” Let us consider each contributing data source as its own story pertaining to the research in question.

Frequently sought as contributing background research in archaeological investigations, geographical documentary evidence associated with an area does suggest a local human occupancy (for examples see map/plat references in Chapter 4). These documents, however, often do not provide the exact location of housing structures or occupation zones for a variety of reasons, including discrepancy of scale, perceptions of the author, political intentions, etc., and here is where archaeology can help. Through

archaeological explorations including shovel test pits and full-scale unit excavations, archaeologists may be able to identify specific areas in which cultural activities were conducted.

As no two research questions are ever exactly the same, it should follow that there will be variation in their solutions as well. In that case, it makes sense to outline not only what the research question is, but what in turn is being sought after to answer the research question. Once again to recapitulate from the introduction, the questions I have addressed in this thesis included: Who lived on the Ferguson Road property, and how did they fit in and interact with their physical and social environment? How did the occupants of the property interact with and adapt to an evolving Gullah cultural identity? And finally, how do modern occupants of the land, as stakeholders, interact with the story of the land? What role do, and should, these stakeholders play in an interpretation of the property's story?

Ferguson Road Tract as a Case Study in Including Multiple Sources of Data

William Adams (1973) is an enthusiastic proponent of consulting all possible lines of evidence while conducting a research investigation. In Figure 4.1 below, he presents a graphical summation of the first portion of this chapter. He first identifies the three single main lines of evidence as archaeology, history, and ethnography. Taking the next step from there, by engaging in single-level collaboration, three pairings result: historical archaeology, ethnoarchaeology, and ethnohistory. Finally, the smallest space, the union of all three data inputs, highlighted in the figure, is where we will locate the most nuanced story of the site.

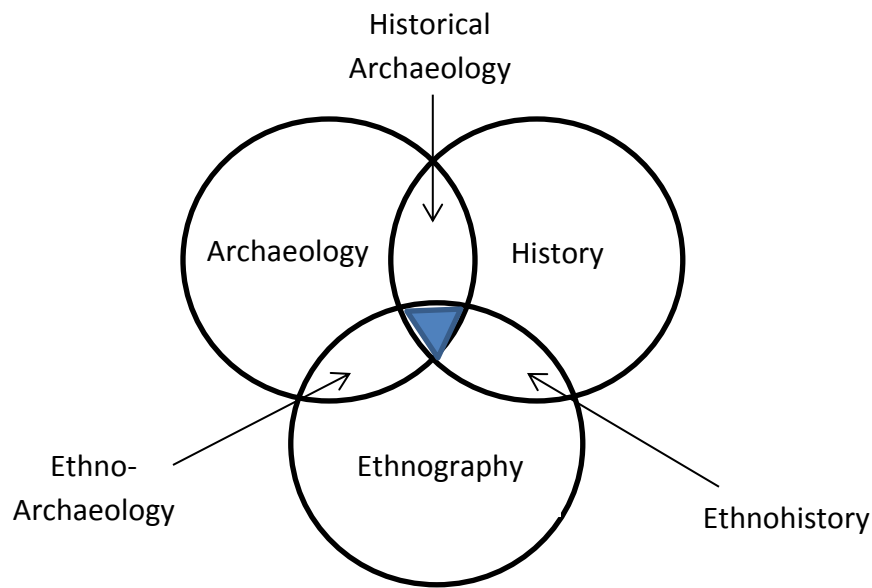


Figure 7.1: Recreated based on Adams 1973: 344.

The presence of European ceramics, as well as locally produced Native American ceramics and locally produced colonowares uncovered at the Ferguson Road Tract of James Island tell us that at various times individuals of differing cultural identities occupied the area. The ceramics do not tell us that prolonged and volatile interactions between European settlers and local native groups contributed to the diminished numbers and eventually erasure of these native people from the local area (Dobyns 1983; Gallay 2002); that information is obtained from historical documentation of the area. The artifact assemblage uncovered tells us that the individuals responsible for their deposition were likely members of a lower economic class. It does not tell us that the vast majority of the local population throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries were either enslaved Africans and African Americans or later on African Americans working as sharecroppers for low wages; that information is obtained from historical documentation (Bean 2009; Edelson 2006; Morgan 2010) and ethnographic accounts (Chandler 2008; Frazer 2006; Sabree 2012).

The archaeological analysis of the stratigraphy tells us simply that the land was plowed during its historical occupation. It does not tell us that it was “plowed in corn and cotton” (see figure 4.1), nor does it tell us that William Hinson happened to be one of the two most renowned cotton planters on James Island in the nineteenth century (Bostick 2004).

Referring back to Heider’s notion of looking to discord in lines of evidence to uncover the most interesting plot twists of our archaeological story, we can certainly find such points of interest in the story of the Ferguson Road Tract. According to his death certificate and US census records, Arthur Brown (b. 1884) is the son of Julia Ferguson and William Brown. This parentage would account for Arthur’s family name, and as there are several William Browns of the right age documented in US census records as living on James Island at the time, there is nothing to suggest that this information is false. An exception, however, can be found in the ethnographic record. According to a variety of ethnographic and ethnohistorical sources (Personal communications with Arthur Brown, Millicent Brown, Minerva King; Frazer 2006), Arthur was the child of Julia Ferguson and William Hinson, who eventually acknowledged his son and “gave him his start in life” (Frazier 2006: 60). So how do we deal with this intersection of the written and oral histories?

We begin by acknowledging that, although they present seemingly conflicting data, both sources tell a story that contains its own truth. By looking to the perspective of each source, we may analyze the story it presents. This is perhaps easier to do after considering Beaudry et al.’s (1991: 158) critique that “to suggest [...] it is possible to confuse the documentary record with the ethnographic record is to confuse etic and emic perspectives”. A death certificate is a public document that explains information about

an individual to the world. By reversing that definition, we can say that a death certificate provides an etic, or external, perspective on the identity of its subject. An ethnographic account, on the other hand, often conveys internal information that was, at least at one point, secret or guarded information, thereby presenting the emic perspective of its subject. Both of these vantage points, however, provide valuable information, particularly if we question why the two perspectives tell different stories.

In the past, many scholars have given a priori privilege to written documents, arguing that they are a more reliable data source. In a recent interview, however, Ivor Noël Hume brought attention to this issue. “I always feel that history is what it is all about. But history lies. You can’t always believe what you are getting from somebody’s letters; there is a bias” (Noël Hume and Miller 2011: 24). If we were to assume that the ethnographic account provides a more accurate tale of events, the discrepancy of the historical documentation then brings us to question what the particular bias of the death certificate may be. In the mid-late nineteenth century, although not uncommon (Frazer 2006), interracial interactions of a romantic or sexual nature were not considered politically and socially acceptable. The information on the death certificate, while it may differ from the most accurate account of events, gives us a window into the social and political climate of the time and society in which it was created.

Stakeholder Involvement

Heritage, the way that a society or culture conceives of the stories of its own history (Barnes and Steen 2012a; Leone 1987; Lowenthal 1997; Shackle and Chambers 2004) is a powerful force that has great effects on the construction of individual and

group identity. Historical archaeology has the unique opportunity to contribute to an individual's sense of heritage, and fill in the missing pieces, if done correctly, and if all possible accounts are taken into consideration. We must acknowledge that heritage is a process, related to one's interpretation of what they know of the past (Harvey 2003). "People engage with [heritage], re-work it, appropriate it and contest it. It is part of the way identities are created and disputed, whether as individual, group, or nation state" (Bender 1993: 3). This re-working can be facilitated by collaboration with archaeologists, as well as beneficial to the result of an archaeological investigation. Such is the case at the Ferguson Road Tract.

I would be remiss if I did not explain that this thesis project would not have been conducted without the initiative of Millicent Brown as a key stakeholder. In seeking out Dr. Barnes back in 2011, Millicent highlighted the importance of the site, sparking the interest of historical archaeologists. Similarly, her interest in sharing the story of the property, and her family's long history of political involvement and inclusion in the area, have made Millicent a key agent in the dissemination of project results, and spreading the gospel of archaeology. Millicent's passion will positively influence those around her, and perhaps inspire others to approach archaeology with an equal fervor.

By working with various stakeholders and maintaining an active relationship throughout the research process, historical archaeologists will assist individuals with a connection to the land in developing deeper connections with their heritage, while simultaneously maximizing potential research outputs. Interactions with descendant communities and other stakeholders will introduce new data sources that the archaeologist may not have previously had access to.

Recently, a discussion of the ethical obligations of historical archaeology practitioners has arisen, particularly in regards to including stakeholders, descendant communities, and the general public in archaeological endeavors (for example see Castañeda and Matthews 2008; Fagan 2002; Little 2004; Lowenthal 1998; Matthews 2004; McDavid 2004; McDavid 2007; Shackel and Chambers 2004; Singleton and Orser 2003; Zimmerman 2005). This argument has suggested that stakeholders not simply be addressed in the dissemination of results, but rather be incorporated throughout the entire research process.

By addressing all stakeholder groups at the beginning of a project, the outcomes have the potential to be substantially altered. When reflecting on his own work, Reeves (2004) noted that interactions with descendant communities have changed, affected, and inspired some of the questions he asked (as they did with my work, discussed above). Perhaps this is a reflection of the fact that, “As stakeholders engage with archaeology they define a different sort of ‘public’ archaeology; one that is more dialogic and self-critical than is traditionally conceived within the discipline today” (Castañeda and Matthews 2008: 9). Knowing that one has an accountability to stakeholders may inspire a self-critical reflection that archaeologists may not normally adopt when performing work that will be reviewed only by their academic peers. Indeed, in conducting my own research, I was initially concerned with the discrepancies between what I thought I would find, and what ended up emerging as themes in early interviews. In an area that otherwise historically would be expected to have Gullah inhabitants (see documentary and oral evidence in Chapters 4 and 6) I was surprised when such an identity was denied by family members associated with the property (Arthur Brown

personal communication, Millicent Brown personal communication). After analysis and retrospection, however, I was able to resolve my initial discomfort by heeding Carol McDavid's (2002) suggestion that one can accept and incorporate the storylines of multiple voices into the archaeological story; by considering a wide variety of voices, rather than introducing dissent, we can instead see the opportunity for multiple truths, and alternate storylines.

It is not only an accountability to stakeholders that affects the formulation of our work, but an awareness of the emotions that are often entangled in their connections to heritage (regardless of whether it is real or imagined). Such emotions can be quite intense, and it is essential to remain both aware and respectful of these sentiments when working with descendants and community groups. Indeed, "...collaboration must make reference to feelings that drive a community to take the political action of engaging with archaeology and heritage. Having a heritage is a powerful *fact*. Powerful enough to make people *feel* differently about themselves once they discover it because heritage provides a sense of belonging" (Matthews 2008: 179). If these feelings are ignored by the archaeologists, not only are they doing a disservice to the local community and their research subject, but they are reducing the chances of future interest by such groups in future projects, and public interest is currently in low supply at many archaeology sites in the United States (see for example Singleton and Orser 2003).

Awareness of stakeholder emotions is particularly crucial when dealing with sites of enslaved Africans and African Americans (or sites that have even the potential to represent enslaved spaces). The politics of slavery, especially in the Southern states, have been complex, to say the least, for centuries. The descendants of enslaved

populations have the potential to enlighten and clarify fallacies and misinterpretations that have been incorporated into the greater literature on such places (which has ultimately inspired calls such as Steen and Barnes [2010] to address the existence of Gullah culture and its archaeological manifestations):

Descendants of enslaved people help in reinterpreting plantation spaces—specifically, systems of categorization and the meanings of categories that narrowly define home, family, community, labor, and land-ownership practices. Their stories, observations, and lived experiences have often been misrepresented or underrepresented at public heritage sites, in media representations, and by scholars (Jackson 2012: 111).

Interpretations of these hot-button sites of political contention can be greatly influenced by discussions with both descendants and community stakeholders. I would argue that such is true of the sites of potentially enslaved spaces beyond plantations as well. In such circumstances the role of stakeholders should not be underestimated, and will certainly augment any archaeological or historical information that can be obtained.

The Brown Family as Stakeholders

The challenges the Brown Family faced throughout the twentieth century, as well as their history of activism in the area, open a unique window for comparisons to the past. As the political and economic disparity evident in the graves of William Hinson and Julia Ferguson (in figure 7.2 below) remind us, political complexities have been present in their family line as far back as the historical record can trace. The Brown family members can imagine, through their own experiences, what difficulties their

ancestors and historical occupants of the Ferguson Road Tract property would have faced. They have a great stake in the research conducted on the property, and have clear, deep, and on-going investments in the results of any projects conducted.



Figure 7.2: Graves of William Godber Hinson (left) and Julia Ferguson (right).

Although there is no current proof that the Brown family is directly connected to the archaeologically identified occupation of the sites, I consider collaboration with Millicent and her family relevant as a descendant community. Indeed, according to Jonathan Boyarin, “the best ethnography, of course, does not rigidly choose either a spatialist or chronological analysis, but keeps aware of the politics of dimensionality” (Boyarin 1994: 8). Given Millicent’s feelings of closeness to the land, does that not give her equal authority in landscape interpretation as an archaeologist or a descendant community? And do her memories and interpretations, even if not directly descended, not carry equal weight?

While there could be a substantial group of individuals invested in the Ferguson Road Tract property (the Gullah and African American communities, anyone interested in the history of agriculture or plantations on James Island, those interested in

broader Charleston history, etc.), I have focused on the Brown Family as my main stakeholder group of interest. A large part of this has to do with accessibility—their proximity to the site of interest (living on it) makes them uniquely approachable. Moreover, it was the Brown Family who first initiated conversations regarding the property, and without them I would not have begun investigating the Ferguson Road Tract story.

Stakeholders and Dissemination

Dissemination of research results is a very important part of an archaeological investigation. After having collaborated with public groups, communities, and stakeholders, it is crucial that we share the end result with everyone who has been involved. Indeed, the American Anthropological Association (AAA) even included in their code of ethics for all anthropologists a mandate to share final results of a project with all parties involved. Yet all too often, archaeologists and anthropologists do not do much more than present their findings at an academic conference or publish in a scholarly journal, methods of dissemination that will not reach their greater stakeholder pool. As Whitney Battle Baptiste (2001: 21) observes, “some of the key stakeholders that [we] think about when [we] write and interpret rarely attend the professional conferences where [we] present a paper; these stakeholders rarely subscribe to the journals that [we] contribute articles to; and lastly those whom [we] write about are no longer here to tell [us] if [we are] getting it right.” It is for these reasons that the need for clear dissemination of results is needed in an accessible, public forum.

Collaboration with stakeholders can be extremely beneficial for the archaeologist, especially when it comes to dissemination of project results. Working closely with stakeholders increases dissemination of information back to the general public, a major goal of archaeologists. In an interview in 2012, echoing the feelings associated with heritage identified by Matthews (2008), Millicent explains to me how her personal connections and family history have inspired an interest in spreading the story of the Ferguson Road Tract sites:

K: So my final thing to ask you, as you have all of these different lines of your heritage, the physical land, your political background, and what you've seen come out of the archaeology here, do you have any personal interpretations or reflections or thoughts about the past of this land?

M: I think there's an irony, and I just wish my father were alive, because I just think there's something really wonderfully romantic, and even ironic that J. Arthur Brown would have been growing up and living and having a family, who's still on the property, on the very site that all these other people [prehistoric Native American groups] had existed.

K: Yes.

M: I just think there's something magical about that, you know. We don't know exactly the nature of the relationship, you know, so far the archaeology has suggested that these were low-level quarters that existed, so it's not like there was this big house and that everybody worked for [...] I hope we'll find that out somehow, but that's my major thing about the land, finding that some bygone time the Indians were coming, and the black folks were there, and they were

teaching each other fishing secrets, and how to do ceramics, cause we found different kinds of ceramic styles, you know, it's like, you know did people really just kind of get along and interact, you know, on this property? And my father would be so tickled to know that.

M: That that would just make his life, you know. So that he would see his legacy as taking us back to a time when people got along.

M: That somehow there was an honest interaction of legacy and culture and intermingling or whatever. That's sort of it, and you know I may just be kind of romanticizing that, but that's sort of what the whole thing means to me, you know. In my teaching and with my family members, especially since I do have these younger nieces and nephews who live on the property, it also is about helping them to appreciate where it came from, how we got it, how long we held on, *I want them always to go out to museums and to historic sites, but for them to know that it's not just George Washington's house that will be studied. You live on land that has a story also that is as valid and as valuable.* [emphasis added]

This last portion of Millicent's observations highlight the plight of the Gullah past in academic research. Theirs is a story tied to the land that needs to be told as well; Gullah communities played significant roles in past activities that have helped shape the world we live in today. Millicent's (and the rest of the Brown family's) interest in disseminating the results of research conducted of the Ferguson Road Tract sites certainly partially result from their collaboration in the project as stakeholders. Millicent continues to describe a moment during TRC's 2007 excavation when she and her family were observing the archaeologists during their work. One of the archaeologists on the project

engaged her five-year-old nephew in the work, demonstrating basic archaeological techniques and explaining to the child what the team was finding. Millicent was touched by what she observed and thought, “Wouldn’t it be wonderful if this family could take a little bit of this land and turn it into an interpretive site? Even if it was just a very small space where kids, especially African Americans could come and maybe be introduced to archaeology?” (Millicent Brown personal communications). Collaborations with Millicent and the rest of the Brown family have opened roads to an extremely beneficial network of future partnerships and greatly increased dissemination potential of the story of the Ferguson Road Tract sites.

Figure 7.3 below is a photo of a Live Oak tree located on the Ferguson Road Tract property, less than fifty meters away from the excavation area. This grand tree holds particular importance for the Brown Family descendants who vividly recall playing on and around the tree as children. They informed me that an environmental scientist estimated the age of the tree to be around 1600 years (Millicent Brown and Minerva King personal communications 2012), suggesting that it was present throughout the historic occupation of the site. “It is not difficult to imagine,” Millicent reflects, “little kids in the past playing on the tree just like we did”. This observation provides a window to the past that only a stakeholder with substantial connections to the land could open.



Figure 7.3: Live Oak Tree located on Brown family property nearby Ferguson Road Tract excavation.

The sisters also tell me how the tree has become an iconic symbol, not just for the descendants of the Brown family, but for local residents of the island. After the devastating damage brought to the region by Hurricane Hugo in 1989, friends and family called the Browns to make sure the Live Oak tree had survived. Thankfully the massive tree, just like the Brown Family, has strong roots in the land, and maintains its presence on the property today.

The great oak also serves another purpose on the property—to remind us of the importance of incorporating a variety of data sources into an interpretation of the story of the land. Just like the varied and winding branches of the oak, the Ferguson Road Tract property has many varied lines of data that all come together to tell one story. As we have seen in the case of the Ferguson Road Tract, if each line of data were to be followed

independently, there would be just as many drastically different stories about the property as there are lines of evidence, with each skewing the overall message of the site. The social complexity introduced into the family history through the pairing of Julia Ferguson and William Hinson is not present in any documentary evidence, and cannot be identified archaeologically; without the inclusion of the oral account this substantial portion of the story would not be told. Similarly, neither the archaeological record nor the oral history was able to supply the chain of possession of the property, which provides us with greater insight into the potential occupants of the land. Finally, there is no mention or memory of a historic Native American presence on the property among the oral accounts collected by the descendants, and no specific tribal identification at this location in the documentary record; as of now the archaeological record is the only tangible connection to the Native Americans who were active participants on the Ferguson Road Tract. If any of those observations were omitted from the interpretation of the site, a dramatically different story would be told that was lacking crucial details, just as a tree missing a portion of its branches would not be its true self.

Future Work

The work conducted through this thesis research has only scratched the surface of the vast pool of information that could be obtained through an analysis of the Ferguson Road Tract. In addition to the senior thesis analysis of the faunal remains currently being conducted by Lauryn Lehman, there is a great deal of work waiting to be done that is associated with the Ferguson Road Tract. The rich artifact collection amassed by TRC in their excavation still contains many mysteries among its assemblage. Several hundred

sherds of locally produced prehistoric Native American ceramics could add substantial information to the dialog concerning Native American presence in the region prior to the advent of the written record. Similarly, current studies of African and African American populations focusing on production of colonowares could benefit from an inclusion of the colonoware ceramic sherds identified by TRC in the Ferguson Road Tract assemblage (as well as those that are unidentified and could be added to the group).

The historic presence (or absence) of Gullah culture on and around the Ferguson Road Tract and greater James Island area is particularly fascinating, and clearly merits further research. Millicent and Minerva recall visiting with their “country cousins” during their childhood summers on James Island. This branch of the family, according to the sisters, was distinct from the educated, downtown branch of the Brown Family. They acknowledged differences in behaviors and language, yet did not associate these family members with a Gullah identity. The sisters maintain that they did not grow up speaking Gullah, and that they see the idea of “Gullah identity” as a recent nomenclature, and even went so far as to suggest that “some of the best Gullah speakers are white” (Millicent Brown and Minerva King personal communication 2012). Arthur Brown’s observations of not having grown up identifying as or speaking Gullah, yet facing severe communication difficulties when he moved off the island, tell a similar story to that which Millicent and Minerva present. Future research that addresses the possibility of the descriptive identity-related nomenclature concerning Gullah culture as being a relatively recent phenomenon could help a great deal in providing clues in interpreting future cultural observations.

As Millicent and I stand on Camp road looking down under the canopy of oaks towards the Ferguson Road Tract, she recalls a memory of walking down the same road as a young girl, long before economic development had altered the island to the state it is today. She made her way home on a dirt road, with the beams that made their way down from the stars the only glow to light her way. She was separated from the hustle and bustle of downtown Charleston by what seemed a colossal distance. So much had changed since the arrival of the Europeans and Africans, yet in that moment Millicent felt a connection to her ancestors and their experiences on James Island. So much has again changed now that Millicent is grown, yet now she and her family, through working as stakeholders with historical archaeologists, are bringing the stories of those ancestors and their shared home to life.



Figure 7.4 View looking down Camp Road towards the Ferguson Road Tract

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